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[THIS Sonnet by Robert Browning, addressed to the memory of his parents—from a MS. in the handwriting of Miss Browning—was among the papers disposed of at the Browning Sale in May 1913.—EDITOR.]

' WORDS I might else have been compelled to say  
In silence to my heart,—great love, great praise  
Of thee, my Father—have been freely said  
By those whom none shall blame ; and while thy life  
Endures, a beauteous thing, in their record  
I may desist ; but thou art not alone :  
They lay beside thee whom thou lovest most ;  
Soft sanctuary-tapers of thy house,  
Close-curtained when the Priest came forth,—on these  
Let peace be, peace on thee, my Mother too !  
The child that never knew you, and the Girl  
In whom your gentle souls seemed born again  
To bless us longer. Peace like yours be mine  
Till the same quiet home receive us all.'

ROBERT BROWNING.

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*THE LOST TRIBES.*<sup>1</sup>

BY GEORGE A. BIRMINGHAM.

## CHAPTER XVII.

THE village of Druminawona was stirred to unusual excitement next day by the arrival, about noon, of the motor-car which Mrs. Dann had ordered from Dublin. There was, at first, no doubt in anyone's mind that it was Mrs. Dann's car. It stopped in front of the police barrack, and the young man in charge of it asked his way to Druminawona House. Sergeant Ginty's first impulse was to give him the directions he needed, but the sergeant looked at him before speaking, and a doubt crept into his mind. The young man struck him as a very superior person, not in the least like a servant. He spoke with a refined accent difficult to trace to any part of Ireland. It was possible that he was not a hired servant, but some new friend of Mrs. Dann's. Sergeant Ginty determined to find out something about him before giving him the information he asked for. He opened a general conversation, making a few intelligent remarks about motor-cars, passing on to the condition of the roads, and then touched on the way in which the County Council did its work.

Daniel Fogarty, looking out from the door of his shop, was also struck by the young man's appearance. He leaped to the conclusion that he must be the first of the great flight of wealthy tourists who were to come to Druminawona under the protection of Mrs. Dann. He crossed the road and joined Sergeant Ginty beside the car. He arrived just in time to hear the sergeant's remarks about the County Council. If the driver of the car were, as seemed likely, a man of wealth and position, it was certain that he would be hostile to any form of popular government in Ireland. Fogarty joined heartily in the abuse of the County Council. The sergeant, he felt sure, would not betray the fact that he was a member of that body. Jamesy Casey was, as it happened, standing at the gate of the priest's yard when the car drove into the village. He

<sup>1</sup> Copyright, 1914, by Canon J. O. Hannay, in the United States of America.

was feeling depressed. Father Roche had spoken to him very sternly earlier in the day. He had walked up to the rectory at ten o'clock and solemnly pledged himself to marry Onny Donovan. He felt in need of some cheering excitement. He joined the group round the car.

Sergeant Ginty was—as a policeman should be—skilled in getting the information he wanted even from a reluctant witness. Few secrets could be kept for long from a man of Fogarty's active intelligence. In a very few minutes it was obvious that the driver of the car was not another wealthy American, but Mrs. Dann's hired servant. His appearance and curious accent were misleading. Daniel Fogarty hospitably invited him into the shop to have a drink. The stranger refused the invitation curtly. Fogarty and the sergeant were both impressed. This was their first experience of a new kind of man. The drivers of motor-cars are not invariably teetotallers, but they are men who have received a scientific education. They are naturally inclined to regard the human body as a machine to be supplied for its work with suitable fuel in the form of food. They know that whisky is not food. The old-fashioned groom, who spent his life with horses, was accustomed to living creatures. He knew that other things besides oats and hay went to the making of an efficient horse. The encouragement of cheerful companionship makes no difference to the running of the motor-car. It does affect the temper and willingness of a horse. Whisky is, perhaps, not food. Cheerfulness is not oats nor hay; but it has its value. The groom was therefore not disposed to neglect the possible advantages of whisky. And the disadvantage of drinking whisky, the insidious way in which the spirit robs an unsuspecting man of his self-control, is much more dangerous to the mechanic than to the groom. A machine has no sympathy with a drunken driver. It smashes itself, and probably him, quite relentlessly. A horse, on the other hand, becomes more careful when it recognises that its rider is incapable. A groom can afford to run risks of intoxication which no sane chauffeur would ever take.

Fogarty, though a philosopher of wide intelligence, did not understand this difference between the new men of engines and the old men of living horses. He repeated his invitation and again heard it refused.

Then Father Roche came out of his presbytery and approached the motor-car.

'Is it up to Druminawona House you're going?' he said.

'Yes,' said the driver, 'I want to go there if you will tell me the way.'

'Where's the hurry?' said Daniel Fogarty. 'Sure the day is long.'

'It would suit you better,' said Sergeant Ginty severely, 'to be minding your own business instead of interfering with a man who's trying to do what he's paid for.'

'It's to Mrs. Dann you're going?' said Father Roche.

'Where else?' said Daniel Fogarty. 'Is there any other one in the place?'

'I'm thinking of going up there myself,' said Father Roche.

The driver had, we may hope, a proper respect for clergy, but he did not feel justified in offering to take Father Roche with him. He was hired, so he understood, by a Mrs. Dann. He did not yet know what kind of a lady she was. She might like her car used by chance wayfarers; but she might not. Daniel Fogarty resented the driver's silence. It seemed to him natural and right that any vehicle—horse-drawn or petrol-driven—should be used by anyone who wanted to go in the direction of the place for which it was heading.

'Get in, Father,' he said, opening the door as he spoke. 'It's two miles, or maybe more, to the big house, and you'll be better driving than walking.'

'How many does the car hold?' said Father Roche.

Sergeant Ginty surveyed it critically.

'Three and the driver,' he said judicially.

'Six,' said Daniel Fogarty—'six any way, and more if you was to sit familiar.'

'Five,' said the driver—'four and myself.'

'There's myself and a few other people,' said Father Roche, 'that has business of a very particular kind with Mrs. Dann. I suppose now that you wouldn't have any objection to driving us up to the house.'

'He would not, of course,' said Daniel Fogarty. 'It's pleased he'd be to do anything your reverence might ask him.'

'Will you let the young man answer for himself?' said Sergeant Ginty.

'You're mighty civil and obliging this morning, Daniel Fogarty,' said Father Roche, 'but I didn't notice that you were so ready to do what I asked you yourself, last night, when I was talking to you about the meeting.'



Fogarty grinned sheepishly and drew back a little from the motor-car. Father Roche looked round him. Jamesy Casey had also sidled away. He was half-way back to the presbytery yard when Father Roche saw him.

'As you're so anxious to be obliging,' said Father Roche to Fogarty, 'you can run after Jamesy Casey and bring him back here. I want to speak to him.'

Daniel Fogarty did as he was bidden promptly. He was not prepared to attend the meeting or in any other way to protest against Mrs. Dann's plans. But he could not possibly lose money by running after Jamesy Casey. It was quite clear then that the young man in the motor-car would drink nothing.

'I wouldn't ask you to do such a thing,' said Father Roche to the driver, 'if it was only my own convenience that had to be thought about; but Mrs. Dann will be wanting to see the people I'm bringing with me as soon as possible.'

The driver felt that he was being pushed into a difficult position. He hesitated for a moment longer. Then he realised that he had little hope of finding the way to Druminawona House unless he took a guide with him in the car.

'Very well,' he said; 'I'll take you.'

Fogarty came back, leading Jamesy Casey by the arm.

'I have him here, your reverence,' he said, 'and it's a hard enough job I had to make him come.'

'Didn't you tell me, Father,' said Jamesy, 'that I was to be cleaning out the hen-house, and after that——'

'What I tell you now,' said Father Roche, 'is to run up to the rectory as fast as your legs will carry you——'

'To the rectory, is it?' said Jamesy.

He had been to the rectory once already that morning. He could not suppose that Father Roche wanted him to pledge himself further to Onny Donovan.

'When you get there,' said Father Roche, 'you'll tell Mr. Mervyn that I'll call round for him with a motor-car in a quarter of an hour, and that I'd be glad if he'll have Onny Donovan ready to come with us. He'll know what it's for. You'll be wanted yourself too, Jamesy.'

'Sure you won't be for marrying us to-day?' said Jamesy.

'I will not marry you to-day, though you deserve it. Go now and do what I tell you.'

Jamesy was vaguely apprehensive. It was a relief to him to

know that he was not to be married immediately ; but he dreaded some unknown preliminary ceremony which might be horrible. He did not understand why he and Onny should be dragged up to Druminawona House in a motor-car. It was, however, plainly to his advantage to propitiate Father Roche, as much as possible, by prompt obedience. He set out for the rectory at a sharp trot.

'I'll be with you in ten minutes,' said Father Roche to the young man in the motor. 'I have to change my coat and lace on a pair of boots.'

He turned and went back to the presbytery. Sergeant Ginty looked after Jamesy Casey with an expression of disgust on his face. The young man in the motor-car was grinning.

'The people of this country,' said Sergeant Ginty, 'is priest-ridden something terrible. Isn't it a shame to see a young man running away like that at the bidding of a priest ?'

Fogarty was standing behind him as he spoke. If the sergeant had known this he would have been more cautious about what he said.

'Keep a civil tongue in your head, sergeant,' said Fogarty. 'What right have you to be insulting the people you live among, before a young man who might be a good Catholic for all you know ? What did you say your name was ?' he added, speaking to the chauffeur.

'I don't think I told you ; but I don't mind your knowing that it's Michael Staunton.'

'There,' said Fogarty ; 'what did I tell you ? As good a Catholic name as ever I heard.'

'My mother was a Protestant,' said Staunton.

'I respect her for it,' said the sergeant.

'I haven't seen the necessity for either religion so far,' said Staunton. 'I'm a free-thinker.'

'The Lord save us !' said Fogarty, genuinely shocked. 'Do you mean to tell us you've no religion at all ?'

'None whatever.'

'I'm not surprised, then,' said Fogarty, 'that you refused a glass of whisky when it was offered to you. I suppose you're that way on account of spending all your time with them stinking motor-cars.'

There was evidently a connection in Daniel Fogarty's mind between atheists, teetotallers, and skilled mechanics. It is, indeed, certain that men who look after horses and drink in a

natural way are seldom found in active opposition to religion. But it is not necessary to conclude that a knowledge of machinery is, in itself, destructive of faith. The case of Michael Staunton was in many ways peculiar. As the child of a mixed marriage his religious training had been overdone. Most children have one set of doctrines taught to them. Michael Staunton had two. His spiritual stomach—if such a phrase is allowable—was overloaded in infancy. His spiritual digestion suffered in after-life. It is this risk which makes all ecclesiastics afraid of what are called mixed marriages. The clergy have the wisdom born of centuries of experience behind them, and they know that while most men, if taken young, can be taught to believe one creed, hardly any man can be induced to accept two, especially when they contradict each other on important points. Besides, Michael Staunton had served his apprenticeship in England, a notoriously irreligious country. It was this foreign education which gave him the kind of courage required for the making of a dangerous confession. There are, it is reputed, several men in Ireland who are not altogether sound in any faith; but they do not say so out loud. They are afraid of incurring the dislike of devoted souls like Daniel Fogarty. Michael Staunton was made to feel himself an outcast almost at once. Daniel Fogarty turned and walked back to his own shop. The sergeant, no less sincerely religious in his own way, scowled at Michael and went into the barracks.

Father Roche came out of the presbytery and sat down beside Michael Staunton. He was, of course, ignorant of that young man's deplorable lack of belief. At the rectory Father Roche got out. Mr. Mervyn was standing on the steps. His face wore an expression of anxious perplexity. He had received the priest's message and was ready to start; but he did not know where he was going, or why. Father Roche whispered to him.

'If we're thinking of distracting her mind by means of the marriage,' he said, 'the sooner we're at it the better, before she has anything done that it might be difficult to undo after. When I saw the motor-car on the street, it struck me that we couldn't do better than go up to the house in it, taking Onny Donovan and Jamesy Casey along with us so as she'll see them.'

'Very well,' said Mr. Mervyn. 'If you think it will be of any use.'

Considered by daylight, the plan of diverting Mrs. Dann's energies from the play by means of a marriage did not seem

very hopeful; but Father Roche was evidently still full of confidence.

'Didn't Mr. Sebright say last night,' he said, 'that a marriage would be a grand thing for the purpose? And wouldn't he know? Tell me now, have you Onny ready?'

Onny was ready. She was, in fact, rather more completely prepared for the interview with Mrs. Dann than she wanted to be. Delia had insisted on her wearing the new blouse. Onny feared that if she appeared in it again she might be put in prison. But Delia was determined that she should wear it. It could never, so she pointed out, be worn by anyone else after the way she had treated it the day before. Therefore Onny appeared at the rectory door wearing the blouse. She had very much the air of a dog which has been caught killing chickens and condemned to walk about for days with the corpse of one of his victims tied round his neck. A dead chicken is a delightful thing. So is a new blouse. But neither is desirable when it becomes the unescapable mark of evil-doing, a kind of convict uniform, distinguishing its wearer as surely as if it were stamped all over with broad-arrows.

Father Roche arranged the party in the motor-car. Jamesy Casey was made to sit in front. Mr. Mervyn, Onny, and Father Roche got into the tonneau. This was an excellent plan for preventing any intercourse of an undesirable kind between Onny and her future husband. But the designer of the car, though he meant it to hold three passengers at the back, did not calculate on the third being as large as Father Roche was. Onny, herself a plump damsel, could not by any means be squeezed in between the two clergymen. She had to crouch on the floor of the car at their feet—a position which, besides being very uncomfortable, made her feel more than ever that she was a criminal led off to execution.

Jamesy Casey was less unhappy than she was. He had a seat to himself. The sensation of driving in a motor-car was new to him. He enjoyed a sense of responsibility, for it was his business to point the way to Druminawona House. Michael Staunton sat silent at his steering-wheel, making no attempt to respond to Jamesy's conversation. He had allowed himself to be hustled into accepting a whole car-load of passengers of whom he knew nothing except that two of them were clergymen, members of a profession which he despised. He did not know what to hope or fear. If his new employer turned out to be a lady who liked to have her house filled with clergymen, his situation would not suit him.

He might possibly be compelled to go to church. If, on the other hand, she was a lady with a proper sense of self-respect, who disliked clergymen, he would at once get into trouble for picking up two of them on the road and bringing them to her.

The car drew up at the door of Druminawona House. Mr. Mervyn got out. Father Roche, trampling on Onny as he did so, struggled out too. Michael Staunton sat rigidly upright staring straight before him. Jamesy, his original uncertainty returning, eyed Father Roche uneasily. Onny, weeping quietly, crouched in the bottom of the car. Mrs. Dann rushed out to them. She had heard the car approaching and was all eagerness to see it. She stopped abruptly.

'My!' she said, 'what a crowd! Phil, I'm glad to see you. Feeling better? And Father Roche. Bobbie was telling me last night that you'd dragged yourself from your bed of sickness. Walk right in, both of you. You'll find Bobby inside. I've got Bobbie moving!'

She turned from the two clergymen and addressed Michael Staunton.

'This the car I cabled for?' she said. 'Right. And you're the chauffeur?'

'Yes, madam,' said Michael Staunton.

'Right,' said Mrs. Dann. 'But I didn't say anything in my cable about your bringing an assistant-chauffeur with you'—she pointed to Jamesy Casey, who touched his cap politely. 'And I didn't say anything about bringing your wife down'—she was standing on the step of the car and was peering at Onny.

Mr. Mervyn felt that the time had come for some explanations.

'That,' he said, 'is Onny Donovan, our servant. The man in front is Jamesy Casey.'

'If they're candidates for parts in the play,' said Mrs. Dann, 'take them inside and show them to Bobbie. Bobbie'll size them up, and see what they're fit for. Seems to me the girl looks kind of sad. I hope now, Phil, that your enthusiasm for the play hasn't led you into extremes. I don't want any girl forced to act against her will.'

She took Onny by the arm and drew her from the car. Onny, desperately frightened, cried bitterly. Jamesy Casey climbed slowly down from his seat and stood, hat in hand, behind the car. He escaped the immediate notice of Mrs. Dann. She pushed the other three into the house.

'You talk to Bobbie, Phil,' she said, 'while I make his duties plain to the chauffeur.'

Bobbie Sebright sat at a table in the middle of the large square hall. In front of him was a pile of paper. Beside him, on the ground, lay a number of loose sheets already covered with writing. He had a pen in his hand. He looked up smiling.

'Good-morning, gentlemen,' he said. 'I'm middling busy, but I'm glad to see you. Sally May got me started this morning on advance notices of the play. I'm drafting a few pars: likely to strike the British Editor as interesting copy. My object is to get snap without vulgarity. It doesn't do to mislead the public. If I give them vulgarity in the preliminary encomiums they'd expect it right along, and this play has got to be high art right along from the word "go."'

'There'll be no play,' said Father Roche.

He looked round as he spoke to see if Mrs. Dann was within hearing. He was gratified to notice that she was still talking to Michael Staunton.

'We have the matter we were speaking about last night arranged,' he added confidentially, 'and I expect she'll be pleased when she hears.'

Bobby glanced at Onny, who was crying quietly near the door.

'Brought the blushing bride right along?' he said. 'She doesn't strike me as exuberant, but the notion's all right. It may wash. I don't say for certain that it won't. But Sally May is powerfully set on this play—more than I reckoned. It'll require to be a real live wedding to switch her off. Got a bridegroom?'

'Jamesy Casey is outside,' said Father Roche.

'The bride doesn't seem to be very keen on the union,' said Bobby. 'Seems to me as if the prospect saddened her some. If Jamesy Casey isn't more eager, I think one of you reverend gentlemen ought to keep an eye on him. He might escape.'

'They're willing enough, the two of them,' said Father Roche. 'Stop your crying now, Onny. Isn't it your own fault? If you'd behaved yourself when you had the chance you wouldn't be here now.'

Mrs. Dann came in, leading Jamesy Casey by the arm.

'What's this, Phil?' she said. 'This man seems to me to be frightened. What's he done? Why did you bring him up here?'

'He's going to be married,' said Mr. Mervyn.

'To the girl beyond there,' said Father Roche. 'It was that brought us up to see you this morning. Will you stop crying, Onny Donovan, when I tell you?'

'Well,' said Mrs. Dann, 'I'm prepared to believe that a wedding is a pretty big event in a community like this. You don't have too many of them, I expect, so it's natural that you should want to boast a bit whenever one occurs. But what I don't quite catch on to is why you've brought them up here. Bobby and I are pretty fully occupied with the play.'

'What occurred to us,' said Father Roche—to Mr. Mervyn and myself—when we were talking matters over last night, was that you might take an interest in them.'

Mrs. Dann looked inquiringly at her brother-in-law. She did not understand why she was expected to take special interest in the wedding of two people totally unknown to her. Mr. Mervyn felt that he must offer some kind of explanation.

'There are some curious customs in connection with weddings in the West of Ireland,' he said desperately.

'Bobby,' said Mrs. Dann, 'take down what Phil says. I'm grateful to you, Phil, and I'm grateful to you, Father Roche, for thinking of it. Anything in the way of local colour has its value for purposes of advertisement. I attended a lecture once in New York on the marriage rites practised by the aboriginal inhabitants of Borneo. What that professor told us took my fancy. If you've anything of that sort to say, Phil, just buck right in. Bobby's practised in stenography. He'll take down every word you say.'

'Begging your pardon, ma'am,' said Jamesy Casey, 'but if it's me and Onny Donovan you're speaking about, we'd be pleased to do anything your ladyship might wish so long as there'd be no objection to Father Roche marrying us decent in the chapel after.'

'Be quiet now, Jamesy,' said Father Roche. 'What business of yours is it what the lady wants with you? What was in our mind is that we might have some kind of an entertainment in the schoolroom, if you'd be willing to help us. It isn't every day we have a wedding, and I wouldn't be against there being a dance now or the like, if you'd take an interest in it, and show us the way it ought to be done.'

Mrs. Dann pondered the matter for a moment. Then she gave her verdict.

'As a side-show,' she said, 'a native wedding would be an



attraction. Folks would flock in. I'm grateful to you, Phil, for bringing the ceremony under my notice.'

Father Roche took Mr. Mervyn by the arm.

'Come along out of this,' he said. 'It's waste of time talking to her.'

Jamesy Casey followed them. Onny Donovan was weeping too bitterly to notice what was happening. She did not move from her position near the door.

### CHAPTER XVIII.

FATHER ROCHE was thoroughly angry.

'Did ever you hear such talk?' he said.

He still held Mr. Mervyn by the arm and was dragging him down the avenue of Druminawona House at a surprisingly rapid rate. Very fat men often possess a power of moving fast for a short distance.

'She's mad, so she is,' said Father Roche, 'or worse.'

Mr. Mervyn said nothing at all. Father Roche said nothing more because he was beginning to feel the want of breath. Half a mile from the house he was panting heavily. A few yards farther on he was obliged to stop. There was, fortunately, the trunk of a fallen tree by the side of the avenue. Father Roche sat down on it. Mr. Mervyn, who was not so completely out of breath, stood and looked at him. Jamesy Casey had followed them at a little distance and overtook them when they stopped. He was not in the least out of breath, for he had not been obliged to exert himself much in order to keep pace with the two clergymen. He took off his hat and addressed Father Roche.

'I beg your pardon, Father,' he said, 'but is it all settled about the wedding?'

Father Roche glared at him; but he was not yet able to speak without gasping, and he liked to preserve his dignity.

'For if it is,' said Jamesy, 'I'd be as glad if your reverence would speak to my mother about it.'

'I don't care,' said Father Roche, 'if you never marry the girl, or, for the matter of that, any other girl.'

'Whatever way your reverence wishes it to be, I'll be content,' said Jamesy; 'but I'm not against marrying the girl, only on account of the trouble there might be after.'



Mr. Mervyn looked at him in some surprise. Incidents in the courtship, which had come under his notice, inclined him to think that Jamesy Casey was a lover of a somewhat ardent kind.

'Don't you want to marry her?' he said.

'I'd be willing enough myself,' said Jamesy guardedly. 'I haven't a word to say against the girl, for she's a good girl, and if I was to be married I'd as soon it was her as another; but my mother would be terrible vexed, so she would. Many's the time she's said to me, "Jamesy," says she, "let you not be bringing a strange girl into my own house on top of me. Amn't I able to wash and mend for you?—and what more do you want?" and that was true enough.'

'Get along home with you,' said Father Roche, 'and don't be standing there talking. Can't you see I want to speak to Mr. Mervyn?'

'But why did you ask her to marry you,' said Mr. Mervyn. 'if you didn't want her?'

'What could I do only ask her,' said Jamesy, 'when his reverence here told me I was to? And I'd have done it too. I'd have married her if she and my mother were to lift the roof off the house on me after. Don't I know that there's no luck in going against the priest?'

Father Roche had by this time completely recovered his powers of speech.

'Go along home when I tell you, Jamesy,' he said, 'and mind this now. If I hear of any more goings, on between you and Onny Donovan, I'll take a stick to you first, and denounce you off the altar after. We've had enough of that work. If you won't marry the girl——'

'Sure I will if I'm wanted to,' said Jamesy.

Father Roche got up from his log. His appearance was threatening. Having driven up to Druminawona House in a motor-car he had not a stick with him; but in the excitement of the moment Jamesy did not notice this. He fled at once.

'What are we to do at all?' said Father Roche.

'I don't know,' said Mr. Mervyn. 'I really don't know what we can do.'

Bobby Sebright, walking jauntily and smoking a cigarette, came towards them from the house.

'I could find it in my heart to wish,' said Father Roche, 'that that young fellow was dead and buried and Mrs. Dann in the coffin

along with him, and the two of them in the same grave, and, what's more, I wouldn't greatly care if every other Yank was in the same place. There's little good ever comes from the likes of those ones.'

'Gentlemen,' said Bobby Sebright, 'Sally May is interesting herself in that weeping bride, so I stepped down to sympathise. I'm downright sorry that things haven't worked out as you anticipated. I feel for your disappointment, and I thought I'd like to speak a word of hope to you. Hope is a white-robed angel girl with glittering wings. That's not Wordsworth, Mr. Mervyn, but it's reminiscent of Milton. You'll find words to that effect in "Comus."'

This striking, but inaccurate, quotation impressed Father Roche. He was naturally an optimistic man, and any mention of hope cheered him at once. It was impossible to suppose that Bobby Sebright would have spoken about an angel with glittering wings unless he thought there was some real chance of Mrs. Dann dropping her Miracle Play.

'If she's interested the way you say,' he said, 'it might be that she'd forget about the play and the rest of the foolishness that goes along with it.'

'Don't you take up any mistaken notion,' said Bobby Sebright. 'When I said she was interested in the bride, I meant you to understand that she's interested in the girl. I don't think she cares a cent about the wedding; but her heart was touched when she saw the girl crying. She's providing her with refreshments and sympathy at present. I agree with Sally May that the girl needed bucking up. She'd sort of wilted under the prospect of immediate matrimony.'

'It was on account of her crying,' said Father Roche, 'that Mrs. Dann took an interest in her?'

'That's so,' said Bobby Sebright. 'Her heart was touched. Sally May has a sympathetic disposition.'

'If I thought,' said Father Roche, 'that she'd go on interesting herself, I'd see to it that Onny Donovan didn't stop crying this side of Christmas. It could be done easy enough and I daresay it would be good for the girl in the latter end. Anyway it would do her no harm.'

Mr. Mervyn murmured a protest. Onny Donovan, pending her marriage to Jamesy Casey or some one else, was his servant, and it would be very unpleasant for him if she cried, without intermission, for six months. But he was not thinking of himself, or his own

comfort. Like Mrs. Dann, he had a kind heart. He felt sorry for Onny Donovan.

'It wouldn't work,' said Bobby Sebright. 'I don't deny that you might do what you say. Considering your success this morning, I expect you'd be able to keep the tears flowing; but Sally May's interest in the cascade would be likely to cool off. Your first idea was better, gentlemen. A wedding is what you want.'

'We've tried that,' said Father Roche, 'and it wasn't any good. And anyway the wedding's off.'

'You surprise me,' said Bobby Sebright.

'Jamesy Casey's mother didn't like the idea,' said Mr. Mervyn.

'And where's the use of going on with it,' said Father Roche, 'if it's only going to make things worse instead of better? A side-show was what she called it; but what we're determined on is to have no show at all, either front or side.'

'It's your affair, gentlemen,' said Bobby Sebright, 'and if you've decided to drop the wedding, I haven't a word to say. Sally May will be wasting her energy trying to make the tender flower of affection blossom in the girl's soul; but that won't matter any. Sally May can afford to waste a little energy. It isn't necessary, in her case, that every ounce she has should go to making a wheel buzz. She has plenty to spare. But I think you're hasty in condemning weddings right out. The fact is, you didn't try them on a sufficiently striking scale. The young couple you produced this morning weren't up to the mark in the way of romantic interest. What you want is a bride of lofty lineage, a member of your ancient but impoverished aristocracy, and the young man of her choice should be kind of lowlier, but well in the public eye. A poet, or other literary worker, of acknowledged merit, would be particularly attractive to Sally May. You lead up a couple of that kind, and Sally May will take hold right away to the exclusion of other interests.'

'People of that sort is scarce in Druminawona,' said Father Roche. 'I don't know could I name one, either girl or boy, that would answer to the description.'

'I'm sure there's no one here,' said Mr. Mervyn, 'who would do. And if there were, it's not likely that they'd marry just to please us.'

'Would it be any use, do you think,' said Father Roche, 'if we were to provide her with three or four more weddings of the same kind as Onny Donovan's? I don't say it would be easy,

but it might be managed. There's boys and girls in the place—you know some of them yourself, Mr. Mervyn—who'd be none the worse of settling down. What do you say to that, now, Mr. Sebright? Would it distract her mind if we had five of them?'

'Weddings on an extended scale,' said Bobby, 'would be attractive, for sure, if there weren't too much sameness about them.'

He paused, evidently thinking the matter over. It became clear, by degrees, that Father Roche's suggestion did not strike him as hopeful.

'Gentlemen,' he said at last, 'I'm as anxious as you are to divert Sally May's mind from her present pursuit. I find myself involved in this Miracle Play, and I haven't time to work it properly. If I could wade in with an unoccupied mind and a proper knowledge of the position of the Ten Lost Tribes, I shouldn't mind taking on the job. But the way I'm fixed at present I can't do that. I mention this to show you that your interests and mine are identical.'

'I'm pleased to hear you say that,' said Father Roche.

'As a stranger in the locality I can't do much. But the suggestion I'm going to throw out, if acted on, would have the desired effect.'

'If it isn't murder,' said Father Roche, 'we'll act on it.'

'I'd do almost anything,' said Mr. Mervyn, 'to avoid the kind of public scandal to which a Miracle Play in Druminawona would give rise.'

'Find a husband for Sally May herself.'

'If we could do that,' said Father Roche. 'But sure we couldn't. Who'd marry the like of her?'

'There's no one here,' said Mr. Mervyn, 'who could possibly marry her.'

'I was thinking,' said Bobby, 'that perhaps one of you two—After all, she's quite a good-looking woman still, and you may take my word for it that the dollars are there. What do you say now, Father Roche?'

'Only for there being a rule of the Church,' said Father Roche, 'that a priest can't marry, I'd do it to-morrow. But it's a good notion surely. And I don't see why Mr. Mervyn mightn't be glad enough—'

'I can't,' said Mr. Mervyn—'she's my sister-in-law.'

'Well,' said Bobby, 'I must be getting back to my work. I

haven't got half-way through the preliminary notices of your play, and Sally May wants them mailed to-morrow for sure. Just you think over that proposal of mine, and see if you can't settle it between yourselves.'

He lit a fresh cigarette, nodded to the two clergymen, and walked briskly towards the house. Father Roche and Mr. Mervyn went together slowly in the opposite direction. For a while neither of them spoke. Father Roche glanced at his companion, from time to time, as if he expected some sign which would encourage him to re-open the discussion about finding a husband for Mrs. Dann. But Mr. Mervyn walked on with his eyes rigidly fixed on a point just ahead of him. It was not until they reached the high road that Father Roche spoke.

'A man might do worse than marry that one,' he said, 'supposing he was inclined to marry at all. And they tell me—I know nothing about it myself, of course—but they tell me a wife's a great comfort to a man when he's getting on in years.'

Mr. Mervyn edged gradually away from Father Roche. He was walking along the edge of the ditch on the far side of the road when the priest spoke again.

'And that one's old enough to have sense,' he said, 'and it's likely that she would have sense if she had a husband that she had to look after. A man might do worse, and that's a fact. If she was a young girl I wouldn't suggest it; but she's turned fifty if she's a day.'

Mr. Mervyn was not inclined to discuss Mrs. Dann's merits as a wife. An argument on the subject, even if conducted in an impersonal way, seemed to him dangerous.

'There's no doubt,' said Father Roche, 'that if anyone was to marry her it would distract her mind. We'd hear no more of the play, nor the lost tribes, nor the soda-water, if she was to be occupied in buying wedding-dresses.'

This was probably quite true, but Mr. Mervyn refused to express any opinion about it.

'Tell me now,' said Father Roche, 'wasn't there a law passed by Parliament that a man might marry his deceased wife's sister if he wanted to?'

Mr. Mervyn felt that he must in the end make some kind of reply to Father Roche. Like most meek men, he was capable, when driven into a corner, of surprising audacity. He made a bold counter-attack on Father Roche.

'So far as laws go,' he said, 'there's no law made by Parliament which forbids your marrying her. Why don't you?'

'There's the law of the Church.'

'Well,' said Mr. Mervyn, 'the law of my Church doesn't allow me to marry my deceased wife's sister.'

It struck him while he spoke that Mrs. Dann was not his deceased wife's sister. She was the widow of the brother of his deceased wife. He could not, at the moment, recollect whether a lady in such a position did, or did not, come within the table of forbidden degrees. The matter might be open to argument. He looked round, uneasily, hoping that Father Roche did not know exactly the relationship between him and Mrs. Dann. But the priest was unexpectedly well informed.

'Now that I come to think of it,' he said, 'she's not your deceased wife's sister. My own opinion is that she's no relation to you, either good or bad.'

Mr. Mervyn took refuge in silence again.

'If you were to marry her,' said Father Roche—'and I'm not saying now that you should; but supposing you were married to her it might be a very good thing for you.'

'There's no use talking about that,' said Mr. Mervyn; 'I don't believe I could even if I wanted to. And I don't want to. I'd rather—I'd rather have the Miracle Play than that.'

'She's a lady,' said Father Roche, 'with a wonderful way of getting what she wants done. There's few that would stand up against her. I'd say now that if she married a lawyer she'd have him made a judge before long. Or if it was a military man she fancied, he'd be a general before anyone would be able to stop it. If it happened to be a clergyman, like yourself now—not meaning anything personal by that—he'd be an archdeacon for certain, and very likely a bishop after that.'

The prospect, an alluring one for many men, had no attraction for Mr. Mervyn. Life held trouble enough for a simple rector of a tiny country parish. Archdeacons and bishops have, of course, worse things to bear and are harder pressed by difficulties. It was not in vain that Mr. Mervyn had steeped himself in the philosophy of Wordsworth. He shrank from the responsibility of greatness with a genuine fear.

'I'd say too,' said Father Roche, 'that Miss Mervyn wouldn't have any objection to living in the house with Mrs. Dann. A young lady like her would be all the better of having somebody

to look after her, and to take her here and there as might be required. It's balls and parties that they're looking for at that age, and small blame to them. It's little enough of such amusements any young lady gets in Druminawona. I'm not blaming you, Mr. Mervyn, for I know it's not your fault. You can't give her what you haven't got. There's no young men about here that's her equals; and it's a pity, so it is, to see her wanting what she ought to have.'

They reached the gate of the rectory. Mr. Mervyn held out his hand. Father Roche shook it heartily.

'You'll think over what I've been saying to you,' he said.

'No,' said Mr. Mervyn. 'I can't. I can't even consider it. Besides, I'm sure she'd never think of marrying me.'

'I'd put in a good word for you,' said Father Roche, 'and Mr. Sebright would do the same. It would be a good thing for yourself, and for her, and for Miss Mervyn, and for the whole of us, if you could see your way to do it.'

'Hush,' said Mr. Mervyn.

He had good reason for wishing Father Roche to be silent. Delia was coming towards him.

'Will you look at her,' said Father Roche. 'Will you look well at her now, and tell me this: Isn't it a sin and a shame to keep a young lady like that in Druminawona? It's in the Lord Lieutenant's court she ought to be drinking tea with the highest in the land.'

Delia deserved admiration. When her father had left her, carrying off Onny Donovan with him, she had gone to her room and dressed herself. Onny had, indeed, taken the smartest of the blouses, but there were others hardly less delightful. One after another Delia tried them on. There was a dress, a whole dress, bodice and skirt, made of pale pink silk, draped with swathes of delicately shaded chiffon. By great good luck it almost fitted her. The putting in of pins here and there, the ripping off and re-sewing of some hooks and eyes was a pleasure, not a toil; and Delia, who for years had been her own dressmaker, did it skilfully. A hat was found—one of nine hats, all beautiful, which suited the dress. It was white, trimmed with the daintiest lace, and pink roses clustered round it. Delia thrilled as she snipped the shop label off it. The price of it was five guineas. Before she put it on she loosened and re-arranged her hair, patted errant tresses into subjection, trained curling swathes over her ears. A hat



which cost five guineas deserved a well-ordered resting-place. Laid out in a drawer were eighteen pairs of gloves, each pair deliciously wrapped in tissue-paper. Delia turned them over pair by pair. There were pale grey gloves, fawn-coloured, brown and white. They were of various lengths—wrist long, elbow long, and there was one pair which would have reached about to Delia's shoulder. She chose a white pair, with three buttons and a long smooth space beyond the buttons. The sleeves of the dress were short. Delia wanted gloves to reach to the elbow. In a small box, all by themselves, were stockings. There were twelve pairs of them, all of silk. Delia drew them through her hands, delighting in the feel of them. She crushed a pair in her hand, holding it to her ear that she might listen to the curious creaking of the silk. In the end she chose a thick black pair to wear. She was troubled only about her shoes. There were no London shoes.

She set the looking-glass on her dressing-table at the proper angle, and propped it securely with a clothes-brush. She turned round and round, with a small mirror in her hand, viewed herself from the front, the back, and the sides, and dimpled with delight. She brought the looking-glass from her father's room and set it on a chair. It gave her new and fuller views of the wonderful clothes. From the bottom of one of the boxes she took a parasol, lace-trimmed, exquisitely white, with a long handle of mother-of-pearl. She went downstairs and out of doors. She felt that she must let the sun shine on her.

There is no doubt—all women and most men agree on the point—that expensive and fashionable clothes add greatly to the beauty of the wearer. Poets, and even novelists, sometimes write as if the simple frock of russet brown and such-like garments are the truest adornments of a good figure and a pretty face. But their statements are not true, unless the lady of whom they write is particularly unsophisticated. Any woman, who has given thought to the subject of clothes, knows that fine raiment makes her look beautiful, and that home-made gowns of simple stuff do not. The particular form which is fashionable at the moment does not matter. Skirts may be flounced or tight as the sheaths of beech-leaf buds, bellowed out all round with crinolines, or puffed in one particular spot with bustles—the only essential thing is that the garment should be fashionable. The truth is that no clothes, in themselves, whatever their shape, do much to set off the beauty of a beautiful girl or to disguise the plainness of a plain one. If there were any clothes



which would do such things, we should long ago have found out what they are, and women would never wear anything else. What good clothes do for a woman is to make her happy, and to increase the brightness of her eyes, add to her sense of self-respect, and so give grace and confidence to her pose. They bestow on her a feeling of superiority to other women, and therefore create in her a consciousness of queenliness which makes her movements charming. It is not a case of artistic drapings setting off a beautiful object. The drapings very seldom are artistic and almost always tend to destroy the natural beauty and grace of the wearer. This is the reason why no statue can be dressed in modern clothes without becoming ridiculous. Statues of women wear sheets if they wear anything at all; because the makers of statues, being artists, know that skirts and bodices would spoil their work.

But clothes, any conceivable kind of clothes, so long as they are fashionable at the moment, improve instead of spoiling the living woman. The fact is that the woman differs from the statue in having a soul. The clothes acting through the soul improve her body. There is an actual creation of new beauty, by means of an inward joy, which finds expression in face, form, and gait. Therefore fashionable clothes, which would ruin any Venus ever carved in stone, improve the living wearer. Therefore also—our instinct in this matter is perfectly sound—fashions must be perpetually changing. There would be no inward satisfaction, and therefore no splendour of fresh beauty, to be got by wearing clothes which were, so to speak, stale.

Delia was a girl of natural good taste. She had often succeeded in dressing herself neatly and becomingly. She had never before in her whole life worn clothes which were expensive and fashionable. Standing in the sunshine on the steps of the shabby little rectory, she was conscious of a glow of unimagined joy. She felt that she was beautiful, and therefore she became beautiful. For a few minutes the sunshine was sufficient for her. She required no companionship. It was happiness enough to stand, in radiant glory with the bright light on her frock, swinging, opening, and furling again the white sunshade. Then there came to her a desire for human sympathy. If Onny Donovan had been at home Delia would have called her. Onny was a tiresome girl with a strong distaste for the work she was paid to do. But Onny could be relied on to admire new clothes. Delia was angry with her—very angry that she had gone away to be married with her work undone,

still angrier that she had dared to take the best and grandest of the London blouses. But Delia, magnanimous now, would have forgiven her for the sake of hearing her rapturous gasps of surprise and admiration. But Onny was not there. Nor was her father. There remained the possibility that Æneas Sweeny might, contrary to his habit, be working in the garden.

Delia went round to the garden, stepping delicately, the pink skirt lifted daintily lest grass or gravel should touch it, the sunshade held proudly above her hat. Æneas was sitting, wrapped in deep thought, on a corner of the wheelbarrow. Past experience taught him that Delia was likely to upbraid him for idleness. He stood up ready to produce plausible excuses as soon as she spoke. But a single glance convinced him that this time, at all events, Delia would see nothing wrong about sitting on a wheelbarrow. She was too radiantly happy to find fault with anyone. Æneas was quick to sympathise.

'Begging your pardon, miss, for making so free,' he said, 'but that's the finest dress that ever I seen, and the hat along with it beats all.'

This was what Delia wanted. Æneas had not the educated eye which discerns excellence of detail, but his praise sounded absolutely sincere. She paraded slowly along the garden path, passed Æneas, turned, and passed him again. The back of the dress was as effective as the front.

'The Queen of Spain's daughter,' said Æneas, 'wouldn't be finer, nor half as fine.'

The daughter of the present Queen of Spain is, of course, a mere infant, and cannot be expected to parade garden paths in pink frocks. Æneas was not thinking of her, nor of any other actual daughter of any queen. He had inherited from a long line of ancestors a dim legendary conception of Spain as the greatest of the world powers. All splendour was hers when her galleons brought unimaginable wealth from the Americas, and she landed steel-clad men-at-arms on Irish soil to test their strength in battle against the buccaneers of Queen Elizabeth. A daughter of the royal house might then be fitly conceived of as beautiful exceedingly, and clad in cloth of gold. It was to her that he compared Delia, and, partly understanding him, she was pleased. She closed the sunshade, and allowed him to admire the mother-of-pearl handle, and the great gilt knob at the end of it.

'Jewels,' he said fervently—'jewels out of gold-mines. Now what might the like of that umbrella cost, Miss Delia?'

'Pounds,' said Delia; 'I don't quite know how many. The hat cost five.'

'Glory be to God!' said Æneas, 'but I'll say this. There isn't one in Ireland has a better right to wear it, for there isn't one it would look better on than yourself. And to think of Onny Donovan having the brazen impudence to be wearing some of them clothes. It's bet she ought to be instead of married; but there's some that doesn't get what they deserve.'

Delia did not want to hear more about Onny and her blouse. It is foolish to allow annoying thoughts to spoil the emotion of a glorious hour. Besides, Æneas had said all that any man could be expected to say in the way of compliment. When you have been compared favourably to the Queen of Spain's daughter, and have been assured that no one in Ireland can look better than you do, there is no further admiration possible. Delia left the garden, picked her way trippingly to the front of the house again, and went down to the gate at the end of the drive. There she came upon her father and the priest.

'I was just saying to your father,' said Father Roche, 'that it's in Dublin you ought to be, driving up and down Grafton Street in a motor-car, with a bouquet of lilies in your hand and two of the aides-de-camp of the Lord Lieutenant sitting the one on each side of you.'

Delia smiled delightedly. She had not expected compliments from Father Roche.

'I'm afraid,' said Mr. Mervyn, 'that there's not much chance——'

'There's every chance,' said Father Roche, 'and it's a fine match she'd make, God bless her, if you did your duty by her and gave her the opportunities she ought to have. There's many a lady now sitting in her castle, with a maid attending on her, that wouldn't be there at all if the man who married her had seen Miss Mervyn before he did it. Will you think it over, Mr. Mervyn?'

This time Mr. Mervyn said good-bye, firmly. Father Roche went on towards the village. Delia and her father went up to the rectory together.

'Delia,' said Mr. Mervyn, 'I hope——'

'Father,' she said, 'you're not vexed with me, are you?'

The tone in which he spoke told her that he was troubled and perplexed.

'They're only the things Aunt Sally May gave me,' she said. 'It isn't wrong to wear them.'

'No, no, Delia. It's quite right of you to wear them. I don't want to deprive you of any little pleasure—indeed, I wish I could give you more. But I hope all those fine things won't make you discontented with your home, Delia. We've always been very happy here together!'

Delia sighed. The rectory at Druminawona is not a very lively home. The daily task of harassing Onny Donovan was dull and wearing. But Delia was loyal.

'But I am quite happy, father,' she said. 'I don't want any other home—only I do like wearing nice things when I get them.'

Mr. Mervyn went into his study. He took up a Prayer-book and turned to the last page of it. He was desperately anxious to find that the table of forbidden degrees is definite about the illegality of a man marrying his deceased wife's brother's widow. But the table of forbidden degrees is puzzling. It begins simply enough. A grandmother is unmistakable. Farther it becomes difficult to keep track of the exact relations who are banned. '17. Wife's sister. 18. Brother's wife.' Was Mrs. Dann the sister of Mrs. Mervyn in the eye of the Church? Was Nathan P. Dann, looked at ecclesiastically, Mr. Mervyn's brother? These are hard questions. Mr. Mervyn wished he could be sure about the answer to them.

*(To be continued.)*

## RORY OF THE GLEN.

THE scene in which he plays his part is often a key to the discernment of a man's character, as the inspection of a library or wardrobe will give an inkling of the habits of the absent tenant of a house. To read Wordsworth is to think of those hills and dales through which he walked and derived such pure inspiration, and Samoa will ever call up the charming memory of Tusitala.

But the man to whom these pages are devoted was no writer; he was scarcely a speaker, and such thoughts as he had ran in a small compass. He was just a plain Highland deer-stalking keeper, of a type which the spread of education, facilities of communication, and the alteration of the condition of landowners, will soon sweep away. The poverty of Scottish lairds, which necessitates the letting of their forests to strangers year by year, more often than not to rich *parvenus*, who have no personal interest in the country beyond that of mere sport, and who are in most cases completely out of touch with the inhabitants, is doing much to spoil the character, the native simplicity, of the Highlander. He is beginning to regard his employer from the same point of view as the innkeeper does the tourist, as a person from whom as much as possible is to be got during a short season; and, I regret to say, the daily dole of whisky, which it is customary to mete out to the ghillies, is not calculated to tend towards a temperate habit.

The clannish feeling, however, still crops up in curious ways. I knew a servant-girl, who, looking for a compartment, when she was travelling home for the holidays, chose one where a shawl of her own tartan was placed to keep a seat. The owner turned out to be the daughter of her own laird, who was also going home, and both were greatly pleased at the opportunity of travelling together. It is a thousand pities that this feeling should die out.

Rory's name was Macdonald, his native speech was the Gaelic, and his English limited, but mighty expressive. His cottage—or 'hoose' as he expressed it—lay solitary, miles from anywhere, in a deep valley surrounded by the massive hills of Wester Ross, mountains whose terraced precipices of hard red sandstone, originally laid down in an age previous to the existence of life on this earth, have been called by geologists Torridonian; castellated crags on

which the fury of Atlantic storms makes no impression, save the rounding of an edge where some ancient split has occurred. But in grassy places the wind has got under the carpet, as it were, and stripped off great patches of turf like paper from a wall, and left raw scars—grazes on the terrestrial skin which never heal again.

Glen Torridon is one of the deepest and most impressive in the country ; indeed I have it on good authority that there is only one other place in Scotland—the Pass of Glencoe—where you may see what is practically a precipice of rock 3,000 feet high. The angle of ascent—i.e. the proportion of the height of the hill to the width of its base—is as near to that of the Himalayas as that of any mountain in the British Isles, and its photograph in its winter garb of snow has been mistaken for a Himalayan range. To the eye of a geologist, I suppose, this imposing mass is no wonder ; but to be told that it is now about half its former height, and that it was all laid down layer by layer in sand by the ocean, makes one pause with astonishment, and it is only when a casual split in the rock reveals the corrugated ribs of sand preserved where one layer was superimposed by another that one takes it for granted. Huxley put it well when he said, ' Surely the awestruck voyager may be excused if, at first, he refuses to believe the geologist who tells him that these glorious masses are, after all, the hardened mud of primeval seas, or the cooled slag of subterranean furnaces—but raised by inward forces to that place of proud and inaccessible glory ! '

In the deep shadow of late evening and full night at the base of these rocks the glen is a fearsome place, and I have heard strange noises come from the frowning hills, doubtless caused by natural agents, such as wind, but sufficiently arresting to cause the Highland coachman constantly to urge his horses to their best speed homewards, ' because of the ghosts in the glen.' Such a narrow pass formed a natural funnel in windy weather, and it was the practice to load the dog-cart with heavy stones as ballast to prevent a capsize. It had its moods, that glen, and it had a personality which cast a spell on any who traversed it alone. Even in broad daylight it had an air of profound melancholy as of something very aged, not ' frosty but kindly,' but of something primeval, dating back to the time before the birth of mercy. The sun shone on it, but as on a dead thing, showing forth its clean articulations as of a skeleton of vast antiquity, and the spirit of the past was

always there. I have seen the white mist, smothering the flat tops of the glacial mounds, fringing the river as a shroud over the tombs of kings, full of regret and of icy coldness ; but it is the mist of time which covers both good and bad deeds alike, impassive and impartial.

Though I do not believe in ghosts myself, and have never seen one, yet I have often felt, during the long tramp down the lonely pass in the dim light, as if I might meet some strange being or wraith of the past at every corner ; and it was only when, at the entrance, the grey sea and the lights of the village opened to the view, that I touched wholesome life again. And Rory was cut off from mankind at the head of this truly awful valley !

Neither were the terrors of the place always supernatural. On one occasion I had shot a stag at dusk at the far end of the ground, and this involved a long return through very rough country in the dark to Rory's house, which we reached at about nine o'clock. Something had happened to prevent the arrival of the dog-cart, so, after taking a long pull at the milk-jug and eating some biscuits, I resolved to walk the seven miles home down the glen. Taking my rifle and stick I started on the long tramp. I had already been twelve hours on the march, and was therefore not particularly fresh ; the sky was overcast, and the air heavy and moist. So black was the darkness that the road was barely visible, and several times I blundered into the heather at the side. The distance seemed endless, and the thoughts of a weary man are poor company. At one place, where the road goes right in under the precipice, the darkness grew thicker, and I could almost feel, though I could not see, the bulk of the frowning mass above, and I only knew I was on the road by the sound of the gravel as I swung on mechanically. It is only in a half-light that the imagination awakes to the supernatural, for then natural objects take on the weirdest shapes and fancy clothes them with legend and story, but in thick darkness the fancy is stifled for the lack of shapes to work upon.

On the right of the road lay a small plantation of stunted larches, whose boughs grew only on one side on account of the fierce gales which raged up the glen, and out of this plantation came suddenly the hot and heavy smell of the wild, which told me I was close to stags well advanced in season. I had never smelt it in darkness before, and under these conditions the old prehistoric dread of the wild beast surged up unbidden within me, and I confess to abject fright. I remembered the tales of people being attacked by stags.



on the road, and the thought of my recent murder of one of their kind gave me a feeling of bloodguiltiness. Then a roar came out of the thicket only a few yards off, to be answered by another and another not far away, which made me sweat with very terror, as I felt for the turf at the side of the road on which I stood, and slipped a cartridge silently into the rifle and undid the bolt. I could hear the stags rustling in the wood, and I knew that the broken-down fence was no protection if any of them chose to avenge their comrade. Then I began the most silent creep I ever made, with my eyes and ears straining for a footstep, which I should hear on the road if they attacked me; and then, after I had slunk away some two hundred yards, I broke into a run and fled as though ten thousand devils were after me, and did not slack my pace till I saw the village lights down by the sea.

The hills in the district stand mostly in ranges. Leagach, the tallest of them all by head and shoulders, and supported by his tributaries six miles in length, with his grey cone formed of quartzite blocks superimposed by some freak of Nature upon the red bastions of his outworks, sits as president of this council of the hills. He has no handle to his name like the Speaker, being too large and august to carry the prefix 'Ben.' The origin of his name is wrapped in mystery, being neither Scandinavian nor Gaelic, and dates back perhaps to some former language, long since forgotten.

It is only in the sheltered corries, which look as if they had been dug out from the hillside by some gigantic cheeseknife, that grass grows to any extent affording pasture to the deer. The crests of the mountains, which must have been above the ice in the glacial period, are bare and storm-smitten, and frown upon the valleys like the battlements of an impregnable fortress. Small wonder that Dr. Johnson in his tour to the Hebrides found the scenery inhuman and forbidding: the taste for wildness and savagery had not then been acquired, and literature had dealt mainly with pastoral beauty.

In such a country man is a thing of nought: Nature is all in all; and if we search man's history back to the prehistoric, we find nothing, save a few buried wattled huts, no monuments, no sculptured crosses to tell us of St. Columba, nothing to indicate that any but savages inhabited such an elemental country. Not even a stone circle!

'The Celtic races,' says Matthew Arnold, 'have shown a singular inaptitude for the plastic arts; the abstract severe character of the Druidical religion, its dealing with the eye of the mind rather



than the eye of the body, its having no elaborate temples and beautiful idols, all point this way from the first: its sentiment cannot satisfy itself, cannot find a resting place for itself in colour and form; it presses on to the impalpable, the ideal. The forest of trees, and the forest of rocks, not hewn timber and carved stones, suit its aspiration for something not to be bounded or expressed.'

In such a place you must trace the history of the race in the man himself. You must dig into that shy reticence behind which the speaker of a strange language ever hides himself, piece together the little stray allusions which fall from him unconsciously, interest him in some parallel bit of information which you happen to know, for he is full of intelligence. Above all become his friend. This can only be done by the constant companionship which the pursuit of deer affords, the sharing of toilsome ascents and long marches, and during the restful waits on the soft heather for something to turn up after the whole country has been diligently searched with the glass. Then sometimes the tongue is loosened on other subjects than the all-engrossing one of sport, and matters sententious, original, and interesting are dropped by the way. Sometimes strange facts are revealed worthy of investigation, such as the following.

The proprietor was out with his head keeper one day, and, on hearing a stag roar, remarked that it was early in the season for the stags to begin roaring. 'They generally roar about Feroich,' was the answer. 'What is that?' he queried. 'It's just the time when the stags begin to roar.' 'Why is it called Feroich?' 'Deed I don't know; they always call it that.' 'But what is the meaning of the word?' 'I don't know; it's the name they give it.' The proprietor was of an inquiring turn of mind, so he looked in the Gaelic Dictionary, and found that the first part of the word meant a 'festival.' The second part was a puzzle, but after more research it was found to be the genitive of a word meaning 'rood' or 'cross.' But the Festival of the Cross was surely in the spring, at Easter? At last, after much hunting up of authorities, it was discovered that there was an autumn Festival of the Cross in the early Christian Church, to commemorate the vision of the Cross by the Emperor Constantine. Here was a Free Kirk man, in a district in which there is no trace of Catholicism ever having existed, fixing the date of the rutting season by an old Roman Catholic feast day without knowing it!

But to return to Rory. He was a man you could not date, for he seemed to have been born on a rock in a stone age. He was like a gnome of the hills, hoary, and yet young. He never knew how

old he was. He came into the world before dates had intruded into these wilds, and before a dull registrar was set to chronicle the event of a new man. His home, when a child, was a crofter's cottage, innocent of glass, with a few small holes, the chief ventilation being afforded by the low door and an aperture in the roof for the exit of smoke. By the dim light of the peat fire during the long winter evenings, when the sun set at three in the afternoon, many tales were probably recounted, the like of which have been traced by Campbell in his 'Tales from the Highlands' to classical and legendary sources. This was Rory's only mental recreation, for he could neither read nor write.

No one knows how these tales have penetrated into these remote regions, whether by castaway mariners, or through contact with Norsemen or other conquerors, but there they exist, handed down by memory in the Gaelic from father to son. Neither can they give a reason why, when a person is ill, a cock is slain and the blood sprinkled about the door, for they have never heard of *Æsculapius*. Nor do they know why it is good in certain circumstances to drink, by the moonlight, from a spring, out of a human skull which is hidden in the hill, and its place only known to a few. They have no idea whose skull it is, or why they do it, but they do it because their fathers did it, and believe in its efficacy.

In the days of Rory's youth posts were few and far between, and a rough horse-track the only communication with the outer world; but he lived to see a road built, and to witness a daily post, the erection of telegraph-poles, and a motor-car in the glen—'lepping up the rod lik a great froag' (pronounced like toad), as one of the natives described it. In consequence of the civilising influence of a beneficent laird, substantial houses have sprung up with not only glazed windows, but wooden floors, stone chimneys, and other luxuries.

Originally Rory was a shepherd, in the time when the ground was principally kept under sheep, and, being very wise in the rearing of animals, he never used a knife for such simple surgery as the occasion demanded, his teeth being the natural substitute, so primitive were his ways. Never having strained his eyes by the use of books, he was able to distinguish objects at an immense distance almost to the day of his death. 'I make it eye out,' he would say. But when the hills were turned into a deer forest, he naturally became a stalker. In appearance he was a cross between Socrates and the usual pictures of the prophet Elisha. His crown was bald, and fringed with white curly hair which had once been the

lightest yellow. The golden tint remained in streaks in his white beard, and his fresh pink complexion spoke strongly of pure Scandinavian blood, while the iris of his eye was as blue as a forget-me-not. He was a hill-man in every line of his figure, short, sturdy, and spare, and the delicate moulding and beauty of his legs and ankles would have suited a Greek athlete, and were worthy of a sculptor's admiration.

It has often been observed that winners of prizes and great athletes do not as a rule possess strikingly ideal figures, but rather the reverse, and that symmetrical men, artist's models for instance, are no good when it comes to action. If this is so, Rory was an 'exception which proves the rule,' for his activity was prodigious. In his youth he was said to have been able to run down the goats on the hills, though not without an extra call on his powers. 'Where sheeps can go, I can go, but the goats is aaful,' was the way that he put it. At any rate, the following incident shows the wonderful power of a man who must have been well past sixty.

He was out stalking with a young man, then about twenty-six, who had done a good deal of mountaineering, and fancied himself not a little on his agility. He was unfortunate enough to wound a stag, which galloped off down hill at a great speed. It looked as if the beast would go a long way, and perhaps out of the ground into another forest. 'Can't we run along the side of Ben Eadh and cut him off?' cried the sportsman. 'Can ye rin?' says Rory. 'Run?' was the indignant answer, 'why I can run as fast as you.' Our Nimrod had made two mistakes that day—he had wounded a stag and insulted the keeper. Rory's answer was characteristic, for he just gave a snort, gathered up stick and rifle, and the next moment his white hairs and well-turned ankles were disappearing round the next corner. The young man did his best, but for the space of over two miles he could only just manage to keep the old man in sight, as the latter stopped at each ridge and beckoned to him to follow. This he did through shifting screes, jumping from rock to rock regardless of the chance of a twisted ankle or broken leg, along precipitous ledges which would have given him pause in cold blood, leaping with difficulty over chasms which Rory had simply taken in his stride; then a climb to the top of a peak, called Sal Mhor, at the end of the range; a race down a burn amid a clatter of dislodged stones, and he arrived at the bottom, dead beat, at a little rock behind which Rory was crouching. The rifle was put into his hands, and, as the stag ran past, holding his breath for a second, while his heart thumped

against his ribs, he fired a lucky shot which killed the stag about two hundred yards inside the march.

Then he sat down to recover, and muse upon the wonders a fellow will accomplish when really put to it, while the old man went off to perform the necessary operation of gralloching or disembowelling the dead quarry. While the youth sat limp, still panting, and watching the ground oscillating in his disturbed vision, he was aroused by a tremendous thump on the back. 'Ye can rin,' says Rory. He still continues to think this was the greatest compliment ever paid to him in his life.

On another occasion a gentleman named Kaye, deceived by his venerable appearance, tried to race him uphill. Rory's account of it was as follows. 'Mr. Kaye, he ferry good waaker. He waaked wi' me one day up Foran Mhor. I smok my pipe. He waak here, I waak here (indicating with his stick his own lead). We waak lik that till we come to the top. Mr. Kaye, he lie doon on his back, he not speak mech. I smok my pipe.'

Though brought up in a rough school of manners, he always showed practical politeness and consideration for his man. When a storm came on, no one knew better than he where an 'hotel,' or sheltered corner among the rocks, could be found, and then he would generally seek out a flat stone, and place it in the dry for his companion to sit upon. His was true courtesy, the intuitive kindness of one man to another, which led him sometimes to sit in exposed places, or to choose the windy side, so as to protect his companion with his own body.

But though kind in practical matters, he was no courtier. A man was a man to him it mattered not how ancient his lineage, how long his title, or how big his worldly position. When that bright blue eye sized up his character the man was no mystery to Rory. If he disliked him, nothing would induce Rory to show it by any word of his, and the absence of commendation was the only indication by which it could be inferred. If he liked him, a short sharp tribute came out spontaneously, direct as the challenge of his eye. He did not possess that common characteristic of the Celt of desiring to say what you would wish to hear; indeed, his opinions were sometimes what you least expected. He was told one day to look down through his telescope, from one of the pinnacles of Leagach, at a carriage which was coming up the glen. It contained a Royal Princess and her suite, who were going to luncheon at the big house. After a long look in silence, he shut

up his glass with a snap. 'They're aal weemen,' was all he said. We never quite knew whether an equerry or so would have made any difference in his estimate of the party.

The only terms upon which his confidence and friendship were to be obtained were those of perfect equality, for he belonged to the aristocracy of good-fellowship, and he who came the superior over him got precious little entertainment for his company: he would get civility, and nothing more.

He was no believer in men who allowed other enjoyments of life to interfere with the business of sport. When festivities, in the shape of a ball overnight, caused a man to take the hill in the morning tired and sleepy, and when an introduction to a stag was immediately followed by a sharp attack of nerves, resulting very often in a clean miss and the flight of the quarry, he would gather up rifle and stick with just a faint suspicion of a sigh, and remark: 'Too mech dencing to shoot,' and march off homewards in philosophical silence. But he was more consolatory to the penitent, or to those who considered his feelings. On one occasion, a distinguished actor went out with him, and was unlucky enough to miss. It had been a long and laborious stalk, so the actor said sympathetically, 'It must be very annoying to you when you have had all the trouble of a difficult stalk and given a man a good chance like this.' 'Eh! it does na matter,' was the reply, 'so many shentlemen misses the shtack that it is not funny any more.' He was using the word 'funny' as 'remarkable.'

Rory had none of the dourness in his composition which is said to be a mark of the Scotsman, for he looked on life with a merry eye, and was fond of a sly joke with his companion. He was once returning with our young friend after a blank day, and their path led through a wild glen, the floor of which was strewn with innumerable boulders, worn by ice and weathered by rain. All of a sudden Rory turned in his tracks and stuck his stick into the ground, a characteristic action of his when he was going to say something important. 'D'ye mind that rock?' he queried. As there were thousands of rocks in the place, more or less alike, his companion confessed that he did not recollect that particular one. 'Shentleman stand here,' said Rory, patting it with his hand, 'shtack shtand there,' pointing to another rock a little distance off. 'How far you say?' 'About forty yards, I should judge.' 'Shtanding broadside,' he added with emphasis. 'A nice easy shot; well, what happened, Rory?' 'Missed him clean.' 'That

was a very bad shot.' 'Ferry bad shot, ferry bad shot,' he repeated, shaking his head, and he drew his stick from the ground and strode on. His companion followed, wondering why the old man treated him to all this talk about an ordinary miss, which was not an uncommon occurrence, so he asked him who the man was. Rory slewed round on his tracks, and, with a bright twinkle in his eye, said, 'Mr.— he shot that shot,' pointing at him, and resumed his walk in silence. The sportsman shook with merriment as he almost seemed to see the wrinkles in the back of the old man's neck laughing at him. Then, after a pause, Rory threw back over his shoulder a balm for the wounded: 'That was a long time ago. Mr.— he shoot better than that noo.'

There was great competition among the forests as to the number killed, and he thoroughly enjoyed a rival's discomfiture. A keeper in a neighbouring ground was sometimes sent out to shoot for the larder, and one day Rory happened to spot him through his glass from the top of the opposite hill. His rival was stalking a stag which was lying down in such an open place that to get a shot was impossible, so he took up his position behind a bank, unconscious that there was a witness of his stalk some miles off. Tired of continually raising his head to watch, he dropped off to sleep on the soft heather, and slumbered a long time. Meanwhile the stag got up and wandered away out of sight. Then Rory, relating it, would go through an irresistible pantomime, imitating the keeper waking up and looking for the stag, and rubbing his eyes. 'No shtack there; ferry likely he gone away; he ferry mech surprised that time.'

One story, however, he used to tell, the humour of which he never could appreciate, for it was more a subject for anger than for laughter. The hero of it was a gallant captain in a Highland Regiment, whom we will name McSleat, and who was ordinarily a very fair sportsman. 'I was oot wi' Captain McSleat one day, and we found a shtack on that pass up there. Ferry bad place for the shtack, he couldn't get oot o' that: no way up nae doon; rocks too shteeep for that. No use shtalking that time, and we waak up the beast. The captain, he began firing aboot a hoondred yards, and kept waaking closer while the bullocks were strikking the rocks, and he fired twelve bullocks, and never hit a hair of the beast.' Then he would raise his voice in shrill indignation. 'And then he told me to go back to my hoose, and fetch more cartradges. I tell him he go fetch them himself.'



It was, perhaps, from some hardy Norwegian ancestor that he inherited an extraordinary callousness to cold, for he never wore gloves on the coldest day, nor would he wear anything under his shirt or knickerbockers. He would sit for hours perched on a rock, exposed to the bitterest wind charged with those small round pellets of snow which sting the face ; and sometimes one would see the white skin of his legs peeping out through some casual rent in his garment, yet apparently he paid little heed. Now and then he would blow on his fingers, and give himself one or two thumps on the chest, and then continue spying. Moreover, he had great courage. Tradition had it that in his youth, if a man fell out with Rory, it was bad for that man, for his swiftness and agility were more than a match for mere brute strength.

One day he was lying resting on his bed, which lay in a corner of the kitchen, concealed by a curtain, when a big tramp came to the door and begged from his wife. Mrs. Rory gave the tramp some food and tried to send him about his business, but he forced his way in, took off his boots, and sat down and made himself at home, ordering her about as if he were master of the place, thinking she was a widow woman. Rory watched him from his corner, and when a favourable opportunity occurred, made one spring on to the tramp's back. A half-naked man, with fingers like a vice throttling him from behind, was too much for the marauder ; he fled out and up the glen without a word, leaving his boots and a broken pipe behind him. According to Rory, ' he rin ferry fast that time,' and ever after the tramp and gipsy tribe treated Mrs. Rory with respect.

On another occasion he was coming down from the hill with a party after a successful stalk, when they almost stepped on a large wild cat, which bolted into a cairn. Rory's hand, quick as a flash, snatched at the vanishing tail. The wild cat's power of rapid lissom twist and savage bite is double that of the domestic puss, but Rory was quicker still. The snatch was part of one movement which whirled the fierce brute round the man's head, and ended in the smash of its skull upon the rock. To face an angry wild cat with no weapon but a human hand requires no ordinary courage, and only a wild man with primitive instincts could have done it. These instincts, moreover, cropped up in other directions. His son, when a boy, having an hereditary taste for sport, used to follow his father afar off to see the fun—in short, to stalk the stalkers ; and if Rory—as was usually the case—found him out, he would chase him back, hurling rocks at his son with no more compunction than

if he were a recalcitrant bullock. A Highlander always drives his cattle with stones. Perhaps the son's taste for sport was quickened by a spirit of revenge, because a stag once attacked him in the glen on his five-mile walk from school. He crept for refuge into a small culvert, which conducted a stream beneath the road, and there he remained, crouching in this wet hiding-place, the whole night long. The stag kept watch, and ran at him whenever he showed his face, and it was only on the approach of some men along the road in the morning that the stag took his departure.

In time, however, the insistence of the son was rewarded, and he was allowed to join the sportsmen and carry the rifle for his father, and eventually succeeded to his post.

As the years went on, although no one could perceive that the eye of the old man was dim or his natural force abated, yet he began to declare, without a tinge of regret or complaint, that he was not the man he had been. The warning of approaching failure of strength sometimes comes to a man like an instinct, and friends cry shame on him for owning to decay, if they do not perceive what he feels. He wishes to creep away quietly from his old haunts without any fuss, like a wild animal; and it was so with Rory. The marriage of his son was an excuse for him to retire, and remove, with his old wife and belongings, down the glen to a house built on the sea-shore, where the glory of the setting sun, reflected by the ocean, cast dancing lights about his doorway. There he would sit of an afternoon, musing in spirit on past stalks and on many a wild day spent among the crags which overhung his dwelling, sometimes threateningly and sometimes protectingly, according to the mood of the sky; and when the crack of a rifle resounded among them, he would hasten out into the road with his glass, and make out the sport from afar. Like many gifted with great personal strength, he lingered no space of time, but died in peace.

He now lies in one of those neglected acres, characteristic of the North, which grow more nettles than headstones, with no kirk's shadow to sanctify the spot: a mere piece of ground, surrounded by a wall massive enough to keep out the deer, and the wolves of a former age. The great impassive hills stand round about as a fitting background for the last resting-place of a king of the mountains, and the most appropriate monument to his fame is the sweet memory left behind by this wild and kindly son of Nature.

GILBERT COLERIDGE.



THE OLD HOUSE AND THE NEW : A DIALOGUE.

*' Il voit autour de lui tout périr, tout changer,  
A la race nouvelle il se trouve étranger,  
Et, lorsqu'à ses regards la lumière est ravie,  
Il n'a plus en mourant à perdre que la vie.'*

MOST of our forefathers, from the days of Ethelbert, King of Kent, to those of Queen Victoria, believed that the Bible was inspired from beginning to end, and their belief has of late been re-affirmed against vain Intellectuals and Modernists by the highest and most ancient Authority in Christendom. When, therefore, David said of the heavenly bodies, 'They have neither speech nor language, but their voices are heard among them,' we must, if we follow ancient wisdom, believe that he spoke truly. The supreme poets of England are, in their own way, no less divinely inspired than were those of Israel, and we have it on the authority of Shakespeare that

*' There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st  
But in his motion like an angel sings,  
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins.'*

So, too, Milton, in his glorious manner, saith that, when the work of creation was completed and the Creator returned to His place—

*' The Heavens and all the Constellations rang,  
The Planets in their stations listening stood,  
While the bright Pomp ascended jubilant.'*

And Wordsworth hears voices in the hills, Shelley in winds and clouds and streams, and Tennyson in the trees and seas.

But if sun and moon and earth, stars, and planets can speak and hear, inhuman though they are, so surely, in less far-resounding voices, can those buildings which are so intimately connected with man and so deeply impregnated with his spirit. And they do converse, especially in England.

*' The isle is full of noises,  
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.'*

Who can look at an old house or church and not see that it is alive, that it has a character of its own, that it meditates, knows joy and gloom, feels, listens, waits, hopes, fears, remembers? Evidently

they have souls of a kind, those old houses, such as that one described by the deep-seeing Suffolk poet ;

‘The Hall at Binning—how he loves the gloom  
That sun-excluding window gives the room ;  
Those broad brown stairs on which he loved to tread ;  
Those beams within ; without that length of lead,  
On which the names of wanton boys appear  
Who died old men, and left memorials here,  
Carvings of feet and hands and knots and flowers,  
The fruits of busy minds in idle hours.’

And if an old house has a soul, a new house must have, at any rate, some beginnings of a mind, for a new house grows into an old one, and out of nothing nothing is made. One difference is that an old house impresses itself on its inhabitants, while its inhabitants impress themselves on a new house. The Present is ever a battle-field between the Past and the Future, but here the forces of the Past are the stronger, there those of the Future. If the conversations of these beings have not more often been overheard and reported, it is because their mysterious language is not very easily understood. Much practice and close attention are necessary before it can be caught from the air and translated into English as spoken by men.

The old house, Oakburn Hall, built in the earliest part of the reign of James I and added to and altered a little from time to time since, stands almost at the bottom of a valley. In front of it the ground, after a terrace or two, falls to the curving line of a long and narrow lake. On the farther side of this water rises steeply a wooded slope which closes the view to the south. To the west lie carelessly ordered gardens. Eastward a rough park or chase runs up to a hill-top a mile away, crowned with a group of noble fir-trees. From this height you catch a distant view of the German Ocean. Great and antique trees stand everywhere, oak and beech and elm and abele poplar. The old East Anglian scene recalls other lines of the Suffolk poet already quoted :

‘How stately stand yon pines upon the hill !  
How soft the murmur of that living rill !  
And o’er the park’s tall paling, hardly higher,  
Peeps the low church, and shows the modest spire.  
Unnumbered violets on those banks appear,  
And all the first-born beauties of the year ;

The grey-green blossoms of the willows bring  
 The large wild bees upon the labouring wing;  
 Then comes the summer with augmented pride,  
 Whose pure small streams along the valley glide;  
 Then shall the autumn yellow clothe the leaf  
 What time the reaper binds the burdened sheaf;  
 Then silent groves denote the dying year,  
 The morning frost and noontide gossamer,  
 And all be silent in the scene around,  
 All save the distant sea's uncertain sound;  
 And then the wintry winds begin to blow,  
 Then fall the flaky stars of gathering snow,  
 The aged moss grows brittle on the pale,  
 The dry boughs splinter in the wintry gale.  
 So every changing season of the year  
 Stamps on the scene its English character.'

Was ever poet so English, and so East English, as George Crabbe?

Round the parapet of the house are carved in traceried stone the words 'Nisi Dominus ædificaverit domum, in vanum laboraverunt qui ædificant eam,' pathetic now that the house looks as though it were nearing its end.

Two miles away from Oakburn Hall stands, on the edge of some rising ground, a house called Maplelea, looking too large for its site and immediate surroundings, and too new for the old countryside. The old country-houses look as if they were supported by, and were the little capitals of, the lands surrounding them; one can tell by the appearance of a villa that it draws its means of subsistence from afar. Maplelea was built in the first and second years of the reign of King Edward VII in the red and white, sharp-gabled, odd-cornered and freakish style characteristic of that period. In the fields round it are clumps of young trees sheltered by fences, and a belt of dull evergreens encircles the whole. One chill April evening an expert observer intercepted this tongueless conversation between the old house and the new one:—

*Maplelea*: Do you not find the air extremely cold to-day? I congratulate myself that a thoroughly up-to-date warming apparatus was put into me last year. It is now in full working order. It is the Macbean patent system. Do you know it? Maximum of warmth with minimum of danger and trouble.

*Oakburn Hall*: I know nothing of warming systems, as you call them. I have my large fireplaces where logs can be burned

as they always have been, but I do often feel cold and damp, though my walls are so thick. Few fires burn in me nowadays. Ah ! it was very different in old times when they blazed up every chimney from October to April. Besides I am old, very old, and the winds cut through me. I feel the weather more than I did.

*Maplelea* : Nothing makes me feel so warm and cheerful as a large house-party, with fires in every room, not to mention the hot-water warming apparatus. I had several last winter, every room in use. Real lively parties too, full of go and fun and jokes, shooting all day, and billiards and cards after dark. One ball, too, with people coming in their motor-cars from the best houses for twenty miles round. Oh, yes, we know them all. It is quite a decent neighbourhood. Not much hunting, but first-class shooting and golf. Don't you think that good-sized rooms, furnished up to date, filled with well-dressed men and women, and lit with plenty of electric light, are about the best thing going ?

*Oakburn Hall* : Do not ask me ; it is long since I have had any experience of such things. I do not know what electric light means. But I have known many a ball here in my time, lit with a hundred candles. Ah ! you should have seen the graceful dancing two hundred years ago. My Lord now sees no company, and only needs a few lamps for his own use. It is a quiet life now, a quiet life.

*Maplelea* : Then you have not always been so dull ?

*Oakburn Hall* : I have been alive with the voices and feet of groups of children again and again. They have grown up into charming and merry youth, beautiful lively girls, and active strong young men, have faded into age and vanished into darkness, and new generations have followed. Varying dresses they wore in every age, but their looks and natures were the same. Yes, I have seen births and marriages and deaths and funerals, as springs followed winters, and summers springs, and autumns summers, and winters succeeded to autumns, and then the births came again and the springs. Ah me ! how often have I felt the freshness of April, the rapture of May, and have basked through June and July with their long summer hours. It does not bear thinking of. Now all seems to be coming to an end. Spring makes me sad now, even more than autumn. The voice of the cuckoo wearies me ; I like better the pensive song of the robin. My Lord's sisters have long gone away and seem to come here no more—most likely they are dead ; his two children are in the churchyard, and so is their mother. The stables are almost empty of horses, where I

have known so many standing ; some of the trees are felled ; many of the pictures are gone. We are almost ruined. My Lord is weary and melancholy ; he reads by his lonely fire ; he hardly goes beyond the gardens, never even to church.

*Maplelea* : Not to church ! How is that ? My master never fails to go to his church, when it is not too wet and when he has not got a house-party. He has done up our church, too, properly, built a wing to it, and put in a lot of coloured glass. It looks quite smart.

*Oakburn Hall* : I am not sure why he does not go. My friend the Parish Church thinks that the reason is that my Lord has become a Catholic.

*Maplelea* : What's that ?

*Oakburn Hall* : The Parish Church, who is very old, says that he himself was a Catholic once, before I was built. Sometimes he sighs over those times and says they were better. The new Church in the town by the sea tells him that he has really been a Catholic all the time, but he can't understand this. He says that is all very well for new churches in towns who have known nothing better, but that he cannot grow accustomed to English instead of Latin, nor to other novelties. He complains that they make him too neat and tidy now, and worry him. Old people always talk like that, do they not ? A room in me, the Musicians' Gallery, has been turned into a chapel, and rites take place to which I am not accustomed. I suppose that my feelings about these things are Jacobean and out of date. It is all very sad to me and strange. But now tell me, I suppose that you despise me as a worn-out old house, you who are so bright, and new, and lively ? I remember that in my youth I had that kind of feeling about Hautmont Castle, who used to stand on the hill above the marshes.

*Maplelea* : I should not like to say that. But I do think it a pity that you do not become the property of a new master. I dare say that one of the rich Americans or Jews who stay here of a Sunday would take a fancy to you and buy you, and do you up and equip and furnish you in the latest style. You are not a bit too old for that, if your walls are fairly sound. I hear that an American has bought Boveney Castle and has improved the mouldy place out of all knowledge.

*Oakburn Hall* : I fear that I should not like it ; I would rather die with the old family, and disappear from the face of the earth. I could never accustom myself to new voices and to new manners. And I am becoming so much used to the present silence and

solitude that I doubt whether I could now endure the noise of a new generation, if there were one, of the family itself. As one grows older every change becomes abhorrent, and one desires only those things which always, and with no discontinuance, have been. I love the country sounds, which are as they ever were, the sigh of the wind in the elms and in the ilex avenue, and, softer still, in the fir-trees along the upper ridge; the voices of the birds round the eaves and in the gardens, and the full cry of the rooks winging their outward and their homeward flight in the morning and in the evening; the splash of the fountain, and the soft fall of the rain. These are the solaces of old age. Human voices I little wish to hear—hardly any now since the girl who loved me most and whom I most loved, my Lord's youngest sister, left me, alas! long ago, and has never come again. If she still lives, surely she must carry me in her heart as I do her in mine. In her seemed concentrated and gathered up for a last manifestation all the character and spirit of an ancient and dying race. None of them all understood me so well. Never shall I forget the tender look in her eyes that last day, as she wandered through the gardens, gathering a few more roses, and turned to look at me again and again. It was in July, a day so calm and pure—

*Maplelea (sotto voce)*: What the deuce is the old fellow muttering about now? He must be doting. (*Aloud*) We must have another talk some day soon. Don't be afraid. Cheer up. I am certain that one of the people of whom I was speaking will think you real romantic, as they say, and buy you when your present owner dies or is completely ruined. About time he was, I should think. You would show up well at a London sale by auction, 'historical Jacobean house,' and so on. Oh yes, you will have a rattling good time yet. It will be better for you and better for me, for I like having cheerful and prosperous neighbours.

*Oakburn Hall*: Too late, too late; nothing would ever make me cheerful, nor do I wish to change. I would rather be pulled down and have done with it all. You will be old, too, some day, and will understand my feelings better.

*Maplelea*: Not I; I shall never grow old, or, at least, I certainly never mean to look or to feel old. I know better than that. By Jove, there's a party coming up the drive in three motor-cars. I shall have to amuse them. Good-bye, old man; take care of yourself.

*Oakburn Hall*: Good-bye.

BERNARD HOLLAND.

THE SEVENTH GUN.<sup>1</sup>

## I.

IN orders and in army lists they appeared as the 81st Brigade, Royal Field Artillery, but always, unofficially, it was their custom to refer to themselves, in terms of quiet satisfaction, as the 'Ould Aisy-firsts.' To do them justice, they could lay some claim to their self-conferred title. They were certainly old, for two of the batteries had been at Waterloo and all of them had histories. Hence there was much plate to clean and more than one anniversary to celebrate. In the manner of Horse Artillery, they called a battery a 'troop'; they were at pains to foster an immense *esprit de corps* amongst the men; and their intonation when they spoke of 'the brigade' would have been a credit to the most *blasé* of guardsmen.

Six years' service in the south of Ireland had taught the officers that therein lay the sporting soldier's Mecca, and accounted for the vain semblance of a brogue which many of them affected. From November to March, hunting was the be-all and end-all of their existence. Though by no means rich, they kept an average of three horses apiece, and when hounds really ran a few of them were always comfortably up in front. They knew everybody in the county and were immensely popular. Professionally, they were three batteries of which any colonel might have been proud. Their young officers were carefully nurtured in the belief that in the army there was no regiment like the Royal Regiment, and that within that regiment their own brigade stood out unique in every way. The 'Aisy-firsts,' in fact, were wholly efficient, very exclusive—and just the least bit snobbish.

The posting of officers to batteries as vacancies occur rests with an important personage who presides over a department at the War Office. It was unfortunate, therefore, that this personage, who knew the reputation of the brigade and appreciated its ideals, should have been absent on sick leave at the time when a vacancy in the —th Battery was created by the promotion of its senior subaltern. It was still more unfortunate that a subordinate who had never heard of the 'Aisy-firsts,' as such, should have been confronted by

<sup>1</sup> Copyright, 1914, by Jeffery E. Jeffery, in the United States of America.



Lieutenant Maunders, home on leave from India after six years' continuous service in that country, and provided thereby with every reasonable excuse for not returning. The inevitable happened; Maunders, perhaps the most unsuitable officer on the list, was posted to the 81st Brigade at Ballycarrick.

It was just a month before the 'Aisy-firsts' had definitely discovered him for the mean-souled inefficient little bounder that he was. For a week or so his big talk of polo and racing in India, and his casual references to the hunters which he proposed buying immediately, impressed them. Then his first appearance in the field, on a borrowed horse, dispelled all illusions as to the quality of his horsemanship. His enthusiasm for the chase, so well simulated at first, evaporated rapidly. He bought no horses—though many, good, bad, and indifferent, were offered to him—but was content to hunt one day a week on his Government charger, and even then he did so in the manner of one performing a penance.

The 'Aisy-firsts' were ill at ease.

Since it was winter and the leave season, there arose few opportunities of testing the capacities of the new subaltern as a soldier, and it was some time before his inability became apparent. His manner with the men first attracted attention. The private soldier, who discusses his officers all day and half the night, is a consummate judge of character, and he is quick to resent anything which it pleases him to consider is below the standard to which he has been accustomed. Now the men of the brigade had been always led to expect a very high standard, and in Maunders they felt that they had been imposed upon. In his battery, from the sergeant-major to the second trumpeter, they disliked him; and furthermore, they showed it, not openly of course, but in many small ways patent enough to the critical eyes of those who watched and recognised the signs. Maunders possessed to a surprising degree the faculty of irritating his inferiors.

And he was seldom just. He would overlook an offence on an occasion when he was in a hurry to get away; and then, when annoyed by extraneous matters, he would vent his wrath upon the same offence the day following. This, in the army, is fatal.

Amongst the officers, passive dislike of the new arrival grew almost to a habit, until one day matters were brought to a climax by the arrival of a letter from India. From this it appeared that Maunders had left that country under circumstances of great financial stress; he had lost a lot of money on the turf, and although

there was nothing definite known, his name had been mentioned in connection with a racing scandal at his last station. He was a gambler of the mean type—the type which prepares a *coup* with great deliberation, and then lures its victim into betting against a certainty.

Lorrison, senior subaltern of the brigade until the arrival of Maunders, and still the most jealous guardian of its reputation, sat on the fireguard in the anteroom with the letter in his hand.

‘He hates hunting: we can all see that,’ he said. ‘As an officer he’s useless—and I’ll take my oath he’s not clean-bred. That’s bad enough. But to hear now that he’s got a shady reputation on the turf . . . it’s wicked, downright wicked, that they should have sent him to us.’

He clicked his spurs against the fender and looked round at his brother subalterns for sympathy.

There was a gloomy silence, broken at last by some one saying, ‘We’ll have to out him, Lorrie—somehow.’ For an hour they argued ways and means over the dying embers of the fire, but in the end they had advanced no farther than a mutual agreement that the official abolition of ‘ragging’ had much for which to answer. To the problem of the ultimate elimination of Maunders no reasonable solution was forthcoming.

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## II.

Outside the mess the massed trumpeters of the brigade sounded the officers’ dinner-call: though not the usual one, for the ‘Aisy-firsts’ affected a call of their own. Inside, sherries and bitters were consumed and dinner was announced. It was what is technically known as a ‘big night.’ The captain of the —th Battery had just got his ‘jacket’ and was leaving them to join a horse battery abroad. To celebrate his departure many guests had been invited, and the table shone with gold and silver plate. The pink evening coats of sporting civilians mingled hospitably with the quiet blue of the gunner mess dress. Champagne flowed freely, tongues were loosed, and the good hunts of the season were discussed for the hundredth time in minute detail.

At the subalterns’ end of the table the second glass of port led to a heated discussion on the merits of two rival quartermaster-sergeants.

'That fat fellow of yours,' said Lorrison, 'is no earthly, I tell you, compared with ours. Our man is a marvel at working a ramp of any kind. Did you ever hear how he got a spot new corn-crusher out of the Ordnance people last year at camp, and charged the major ninepence for the paint and putty with which he had disguised our old one in order to palm it off on them?'

'Yes, I've heard that story till I'm sick of it,' Maunders called across the table, 'and anyway he's a casual sort of fellow. He never turned up to the issue of rations this morning—kept me waiting twenty minutes while he got out of bed. I ran him in, though, and he got a reprimand from the colonel.'

'So I heard. Rotten thing to do, too. Anybody with a grain of common-sense would have realised the worth of the man, cursed him heartily—and let him off. A fellow like that is worth anything to a battery, whether he gets up or not. Why, there's nothing he wouldn't do for our troop. I believe, if we really put him to it, he'd get us a spare gun.'

'Rot! Of course he couldn't. I'll bet you anything you like it's impossible.'

Champagne followed by port produces the effect of a magnifying-glass. Lorrison leant across the table, feeling somehow that his quartermaster-sergeant was omnipotent. To his brain, made receptive by the fumes of good wine, an idea of irresistible plausibility presented itself. To make a big bet; to rely with confidence upon the cunning of his quartermaster-sergeant to win it for him; and then to give the penurious Maunders the option of paying or going—what in the world could be easier?

'Well, what odds will you lay against it's being done, since you seem so certain?' he asked.

Wine had not changed Maunders from his normal calculating self. 'I must tempt him with a good price,' he thought; 'but if I lay too long odds he'll see that he's betting against a certainty.'

Therefore, with great deliberation, he said:

'I'll lay you five to one.'

'I'll take five fifties,' snapped Lorrison, as quick as lightning.

The conversation had been heard with breathless interest by the four or five men sitting at the end of the table. But this climax was more than anyone had expected.

'Don't be a fool, Lorrie,' said one. 'You don't know what you're saying.'

'Oh yes, I do. Two hundred and fifty pounds to fifty was what I took, thank you.'

'The conditions?' asked Maunders quietly.

'We must have an impartial person to help us draw them up,' said Lorrison; 'I suggest Morrogh,' turning to a jovial-looking man in a hunt coat, sitting on his left. 'Do you agree, Maunders?'

'Certainly; only we must keep this quiet. If the colonel hears about it, he'll stop it for certain.'

For the first time since his arrival at Ballycarrick, Maunders was in a congenial atmosphere. Already he was planning the outlay of his fifty pounds.

The conditions, after a protracted discussion, were eventually fixed as follows:

'Lieutenant Maunders lays 250*l.* to Lieutenant Lorrison's 50*l.* that Lieutenant Lorrison will not be able to produce on this day three months, seven guns on the charge of his battery; the said guns to be of the same kind, and the spare one not to belong to any other battery at that date. Both parties hereby promise that they will not divulge or cause to be divulged, at any time, any facts which may lead to the incrimination of either party.'

Two copies were made out and duly signed. Each party kept one copy.

Maunders settled down to a game of poker. The other subalterns betook themselves whole-heartedly to the task of 'drinking out' their departing captain.

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### III.

Next morning when Lorrison woke he experienced a vague feeling of unrest, an impression that somehow on the previous evening he had done an exceptionally foolish thing. As, with an aching head, he struggled into a pair of tight hunting-boots, he remembered the bet and cursed his folly. He foresaw himself, at the end of three months, in the unpleasant position of being compelled to sell a horse in order to pay his debt to a man whose very existence he deplored as unnecessary.

It was in no very cheerful frame of mind, therefore, that he entered the office of his quartermaster-sergeant. The latter, who rejoiced in the melodious name of Pickersdyke, already knew all about the wager; it was his business, so he said, to know of everything that happened in the battery.

'Well, quartermaster-sergeant, what are we going to do about it?'

Lorrison blotted the forage indent which he had just signed, pushed his cap on to the back of his head, and looked up with a puzzled expression at the little man standing beside him.

'I couldn't say, sir, offhand. You see, we can't lose a gun and strike it off charge at quarter value like we do horse-rugs. But I've got a chum in the Ordnance at ——. I'll write away and ask him if he can do anything. There's no need for you to worry, though, sir. I'll fix it up for you somehow.'

Lorrison finished signing the correspondence and hurried off, feeling that there was still some hope.

This was the effect that Pickersdyke produced upon everyone. He was an amazing optimist, a man who entered upon all the problems which went to make up his busy life in the confident belief that he was qualified to carry each one through successfully.

'All done, sir, and ready for signature in my office,' was his usual answer when questioned as to the advisability of getting some piece of work completed. The comfort and the welfare of the battery as a whole—officers, N.C.O.'s and men—had become his obsession, and with him the end, however small, always justified the means, however questionable. He was an adept at the much-practised art of 'making' things, a process which implies, not creation, but misappropriation of Government property by a skilful management of indent and ledger. In consequence he had collected enormous quantities of what he called 'spares,' and thus was always enabled to make good deficiencies without cost to anyone. He had held his present rank now for eight years, to the great benefit of his battery and to the wholesale detriment of every class of person outside it, from meat contractors to the Army Council.

In the present instance Pickersdyke felt that his professional reputation was at stake. Moreover, the incident of the issue of rations and his subsequent reprimand from the colonel still rankled.

'After nearly twenty years of undetected crime,' as he expressed it, 'to be run in by that little waster Maunders is a bit thick. But I'll do him in for 'is money if I see me way to it, though.' With this comforting reflection he abandoned the complicated monthly return which he had been compiling with elaborate care, and strolled across to the sergeants' mess for his eleven o'clock glass of beer.

'E's clever, dam' clever, but 'e can't do that,' a fat sergeant in the corner was saying as he entered.

'Who can't do what, Thompson?'

The sergeant was a little embarrassed.

'We was just arguing the point,' he hastened to explain, 'about this 'ere bet that Lorrie made last night with Maunders about getting an extra gun. 'Ow are you going to do it, quarter?'

'E's mad, is Lorrison. It can't be done—nowadays. I heard of a battery in India what done it years ago, but they was changing equipment at the time and the Ordnance was fair upside down. Besides, India's a big place and Ireland isn't. This 'ere gun got lost on the railway, somewhere.'

'Ain't you going to try, then?'

'Me! Not much. Wot's the good? I couldn't do it, and I'd lose me pension tryin', certain. If it was a few horse-rugs now, or a couple of thousand rounds of S.A.A.—.' He smiled and stroked his chin reflectively.

Nevertheless, for the next few weeks he put his whole industrious soul into the enterprise. Dislike of Maunders, devotion to Lorrison and to what he felt was the credit of his battery, added to his enjoyment of the sporting nature of the task: all combined to make him minimise the risks and magnify the possibilities.

Scheme after scheme presented itself to his fertile brain, each to be discarded in turn as impracticable. Then one day, hardly a week before the expiration of the allotted three months, when he had almost given up hope, he found amongst his morning's official correspondence a letter from the Ordnance which made him exclaim—

'Gor Lummy! there's a chanst yet!'

The memorandum ran as follows:

'In view of the structural alterations in the present equipment (*vide* para.—List of changes in War Material) it is considered advisable, owing to the difficulty experienced by armament artificers in carrying out their work from drawings only, to send a complete gun fitted with the new alterations for guidance. As this gun will be required by other brigades at an early date, you are requested to return it on the 7th inst. at the very latest. Please acknowledge receipt.'

Pickersdyke drummed upon the table with an indelible pencil. 'This gun will be on our charge,' he thought. 'But it's no good our saying "Here you are, we've got seven guns now," 'cos by the terms of the bet it is "on" this day three months and not "within"'

three months, and Maupders, 'e'll spot that. This bloomin' memo pips us by a day. But if I can keep that gun till next Saturday, instead of Friday, I'll have copped him proper.'

Being a man of action, he forthwith consulted the armament artificer on the subject. The latter, however, was obdurate, and no amount of eloquence could move him from his purpose. "'The 7th at the latest," says the memo,' he argued obstinately, 'and I'm not going to be told off for being slow in my work for anyone. I'll be done in time for the gun to leave here on Friday night.'

Angry but undefeated, Pickersdyke left him, determined that by fair means or foul the 'sample gun,' as he called it, should not leave Ballycarrick till Saturday evening. With this purpose in his mind he set forth on his bicycle that afternoon, and returned some two hours later, wearing a smile of quiet confidence.

Quartermaster-sergeant Pickersdyke saw his way.

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#### IV.

In a country where it is possible for the needy officer to obtain from the stationmaster a first-return to Cork and 2*l*. 'to go on with,' merely on his promise to pay it back by the end of the month, all things are possible. Pickersdyke strolled into the station on the following Friday afternoon and was greeted as an old friend by Mr. Donovan, the stationmaster, who was peacefully drinking a cup of tea in the booking-office.

'Good evening, quartermaster,' he said. 'Is it stores you're come after, or what?'

'There's a gun to be sent off to-night on the 6.30 goods train, isn't there?'

'There is. I have the thruck for her in the bay this minute.'

Pickersdyke had always found it expedient to be friendly with the railway authorities. Their good will was often useful in questions of overweight baggage. At this moment he was thankful that he was on intimate terms with Mr. Donovan.

'Do you know Mr. Maunders, up at the barracks?' he asked.

'Wasn't it he was blackguarding the whole of us a week since over the matter of a parcel was left in the goods office for a week by mistake? Haven't I a right to know him!'

'Ah! and Mr. Lorrison?'



'Sure, I know him, too. A great little felly afther the dogs,<sup>1</sup> they say.'

'Well, the two of 'em have made a bet about this 'ere gun, and I want you to help me win it for Mr. Lorrison.'

The stationmaster became genuinely interested. Anything in the nature of a wager was to him as drink to other men.

'And how will I do that, quartermaster?' he asked.

'I'll tell you,' replied the other, and for ten minutes their heads were bent together in earnest consultation.

'Great! begob!' said Mr. Donovan, when Pickersdyke had finished, 'and there's no one to know only Pat Cooney the guard, and he's as close as a dog with a bone stolen.'

'Then I'll have the gun down here ready for loading about six.'

'Twill be 'time enough—and to-morrow evening at the same time, too, I suppose,' added Donovan with an expansive grin as Pickersdyke left him.

Exactly as had been foreseen, Maunders took no risks. Knowing of the presence of the extra gun, he went down to the station in order to see it loaded and despatched. Mr. Donovan was effusively polite, and insisted on showing his visitor the programme of a local race-meeting which was hanging up in the office. While they were looking at it the long goods train rumbled into the station.

'Pull up a piece now, Tim, and back into the bay for a thruck we have here,' shouted the stationmaster to the driver. Then, as the guard's van passed him and he saw that Maunders was still engaged with the poster, he whispered hurriedly:

'Patsy, if ye haven't this thruck with you at the Junctio, say nothing. 'Tis a thrick of the military wan wid another, and no harm at all. D'ye see now?'

'I do not,' replied Cooney, quite unmoved, 'but 'twill be all right any way.'

Maunders, smiling to himself, watched the creaking, jolting train of nearly fifty trucks pull cumbrously out of the station. Behind the guard's van, on the end truck, was the gun, securely lashed on both sides and covered with a tarpaulin.

'Thank Heaven, that's settled!' thought Maunders as he returned to barracks. That evening he made himself particularly offensive to Lorrison at dinner by taunting him with failure.

<sup>1</sup> *Anglicè*, 'a good man to hounds'

'I thought that perhaps you might keep that gun over till to-morrow and then claim the bet,' he said; 'but I saw it off safely myself, so you may as well confess you're beaten.'

'The three months are not up yet, I think,' answered Lorrison. But he had no hope, for it was characteristic of Pickersdyke to have kept his designs to himself.

Meanwhile, on the railway, exciting events were taking place. About a mile and a-half from the station the line bent slightly to the left round a small hill, in the face of which was a disused quarry. A little further on there was a level crossing. A branch railway of about two hundred yards connected the quarry with the main line, but, owing to the contour of the hill, the spot where the points were placed was invisible from the level crossing.

As the engine puffed laboriously round the curve, the driver suddenly saw a red light exactly where he knew the level crossing to be.

'Glory be to God! the gates is closed on us,' he cried, and started to pull up. There was a *clack-clack-clack* all down the train as truck after truck jerked to a standstill. From under the tarpaulin in the end one appeared the grimy head and shoulders of Gunner Ford, the quartermaster's trusted storeman. Deftly he uncoupled the truck and then placed the tail lamp on to the guard's van. A moment afterwards the red light moved away and a voice called out from the darkness:

'What are you waiting for? The gates are open.'

To the engine-driver's imprecations, hurled into the night, there came no answer. The train moved on, and its guard, leaning out of his carriage to ascertain the cause of the delay, failed to observe that he had left a truck upon the rails behind him.

Gunner Ford crawled out on to the six-foot way and stretched his cramped limbs. For five minutes there was silence save for the rumble of the departing train. Then a voice behind him said:

'All right. Come on down.'

Pickersdyke and another man in whom Ford recognised his fellow-storeman pushed their way through the hedge and scrambled down on to the line.

'Stay here and don't make a noise. I'm going over to shift the points,' said the quartermaster-sergeant. When he returned, all three men got behind the truck.

'I'll give the word. Ready? Now then—push.'

They put their backs into it, and, joy! the truck began to move.

'Keep 'er going,' muttered Pickersdyke; 'the buffers at the other end will stick it all right.'

Once started, the work was easy. The truck ran almost by itself, jolted over the points, turned sharply to the left, and, gathering way, took charge, leaving them helplessly behind it.

'All right—halt,' said Pickersdyke.

They stood still on the rusty metals and listened. The truck slid out of sight, and for a short while they held their breaths in tense excitement. Then, in the distance, they heard a metallic clash. Walking quickly down the line, they found the truck reposing peacefully against the wooden buffer of an end loading platform.

Not twenty yards away, with its back towards them, stood an empty G.S. wagon, its horses quietly feeding from their nosebags and its driver smoking a cigarette. In a quarter of an hour they had got the gun off its truck and lashed the trail to the rear axle of the wagon.

Pickersdyke gave his instructions to Ford.

'You're to wait till eleven o'clock; here's my watch to go by. Then bring the wagon back to barracks; I'll be waiting for you at the gate. There's some beer and sandwiches for you in the front locker.'

In dealing with the soldier such details are important.

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## V.

On the following morning Lorrison met the quartermaster-sergeant on the barrack square. The other officers of his battery had gone out hunting, and he was left alone to do the morning's work.

'Anything you want me to do?' he asked.

'Yes, sir. I've got a few papers in my office, but any time will do,' was the reply. Then in the most matter-of-fact way he added:

'Oh! I've got that gun you was asking about, sir.'

Lorrison stared at him. 'Got the gun!' he exclaimed. 'Good Lord! How?'

'I fetched it back off the train late last night, sir, and put it in the major's motor shed, 'e bein' away for the hunt to-day. P'r'aps you'd like to see it. They're all out for inspection.'

There, on the hard gravel of the barrack square, gleaming in the sun, were seven guns, their muzzles in exact dressing to an inch.

A hard smile crossed Lorrison's usually jovial face.

'Fetch the ledger, quartermaster-sergeant, and ask Mr. Maunders, with my compliments, if he'll come over to the gun park for a moment,' he said quietly.

Maunders came, a feeling of impending disaster growing upon him in spite of his repeated assertions to himself that the thing was impossible.

'Sorry to bother you, but I felt sure you would like to see the seventh gun for yourself,' said Lorrison. 'I've got some witnesses, too, in case you want them,' he added, pointing to two other subalterns standing near, beaming with joy.

'There's some dam' trick in this,' said Maunders furiously.

'There must be, I think,' was the reply, 'though as a matter of fact my quartermaster-sergeant has not yet told me what it is. However, that's not the point: I have fulfilled my contract. Show Mr. Maunders the ledger.' Pickersdyke bustled forward.

'Here you are, sir. Six guns we had on charge and this entry makes the seventh; it was sent us at the beginning of the week by the Ordnance, as you know. Here's a copy of their issue voucher.'

'But I—this—hang it all, this is the gun I saw sent off last night at half-past six.' Maunders was stammering with rage.

'Quite so. If you go down to-night at the same time you'll see it sent off again.'

Before the eyes of all of them, Maunders examined each gun in turn. On every trail, in white lettering, was the number of the battery and the letter of the subsection, according to regulations. But the last gun, in place of a letter, had on it the single word 'Spare,' proving that Pickersdyke had quite an eye for effect.

Maunders walked away without a word.

After dinner that night they crowded into his quarters—eight hardy subalterns, flushed with wine and with the fierce joy of retribution. They found him standing on the fender, with his shoulders against the mantelpiece, in an attitude of resignation.

'Come for your money already, Lorrison?' he sneered. 'Well, I haven't got it, that's all.'

'I have come,' said Lorrison slowly, 'with a proposal. You must realise, I think, Maunders, that in this brigade we have no

use for you and your kind. There is a vacancy in a battery at —. If you apply for that vacancy and go, I am prepared to tear up the wager and claim nothing.'

'And a devilish cheap bargain at the money, too,' shouted some one from behind.

Maunders looked sullenly at the circle of hostile faces. In the course of a very bitter moment he realised the depth of the animosity against him. Moreover, he knew that he could not possibly raise two hundred and fifty pounds.

'I'll go,' he said, 'and now get out of here, all of you—and be damned to you.'

They went.

In the mess, Lorrison repeated the story of the previous evening as told him by Pickersdyke.

'Nobody else,' he ended up, 'would have thought of stopping the train at the level crossing by means of the simple device of putting a red disc over one of the battery signalling lamps. He had to do that, you see, in order to give Ford a chance of uncoupling. In some way he got old Donovan at the station on his side. He made him promise to distract Maunders' attention while Ford got into the truck, and afterwards to send an engine to fetch it back. The wagon had been out with the colonel's forage, so he just told the driver to go to the quarry on his way home. The one risky thing he did was to wire on his own account to the Ordnance to say that his voucher was dated wrong, and that the gun would not be despatched till to-day—error regretted. Of course luck was on his side all through, but then so it ought to have been. What's the use of luck if it can't help you to get rid of a fellow like Maunders?'

He smiled happily, finished his drink in one big gulp, and then added affectionately:

'In the matter of the working of a ramp, commend me to a quarter-bloke of the "Ould Aisy-firsts."'

JEFFERY E. JEFFERY.

### THE REAL SYNDICALISM.

'Le Syndicaliste est le vrai Conservateur ; il a sa racine dans le passé et son but dans l'éternité.'

The word 'Syndicalism' has been adopted into our language with a significance so fundamentally revolutionary and anarchic that the English reader may find it hard to believe that the words quoted above, with their suggestion of a conservative Syndicalism respectful of the past, were spoken at the congress of the most powerful Syndicalist organisation in France.

Nevertheless, such is the case, and they were used in all seriousness as the sober expression of an obvious fact and not as one of those audacious paradoxes, with which an unscrupulous demagogue may seek to veil from his more timid followers the ruthless purpose that he pursues.

For years past, experts on labour questions have written of Syndicalism as though it were exclusively a destructive movement. They announce that Europe is being swept onward to the precipice of revolution, and that it is French Syndicalism that has let loose the avalanche. For them, Syndicalism necessarily implies the General Confederation of Labour and its revolutionary doctrines, the essential hostility of capital and labour, the policy of direct action that is *sabotage* and violence as opposed to legal methods, and the eventual collapse of society before the disintegrating general strike. In fine, they identify the whole Syndicalist movement with revolutionary Syndicalism.

Some five years ago this misconception was perhaps excusable. The strike riots of Draveil, Vigneux, and Villeneuve St. Georges had only just occurred. For months there had been a strike in the sand quarries of the district ; a petty local affair it appeared, until one day the General Confederation of Labour decided to convert it into a demonstration of its power, and sent down from Paris hundreds of its most violent followers to aid the strikers.

The result was a long day's rioting.

The Cuirassiers and the Dragoons sat in their saddles throughout the day as steady as statues under a hail of stones and bricks, to say nothing of a fusillade of revolver-bullets which were far less dangerous, as they were fired from cheap weapons at long range.

In the evening the situation became really serious. The

handful of troops had been encircled by the rioters and under the weight of numbers forced up against the wall of the railway-station.

The Cavalry charged again and again, but they could make no impression on the close-packed mob, and the rioters tore the men from their horses. At last the Infantry were ordered to fire into the crowd.

A single volley was fired and the rioters fled, leaving three killed and a large number of wounded in the streets.

Just after this occasion, the writer was dining in Paris with a Radical-Socialist Senator ; among the guests were a distinguished officer in the French Army and one of the largest manufacturers in France.

Conversation naturally turned upon the bloodshed that had occurred a few days before. The politician, the soldier, and the business man, each of them representative of his class, all agreed that within three years the General Confederation of Labour would have overthrown the Republic, and that after a period of anarchy, order would be restored by a military despotism.

Five years have passed ; the General Confederation has led its troops to the assault of society in a series of strikes, attacking whenever it could the essential organs of the State, such as the postal and railway systems, and all that has happened is that the forces of law and order have defeated revolutionary Syndicalism, and the General Confederation of Labour—divided against itself and openly convicted of corruption, with most of its leaders in prison for their anti-militarist propaganda—may at any time be declared illegal and dissolved.

It must be said that the attitude of the strikers at Villeneuve St. Georges had been impressive.

The day after the riots, the writer had a conversation with some thirty or forty desperate men, who had taken refuge in a dismal little wineshop that stands alone in the melancholy fields that lie between Draveil and Vigneux.

From every clump of trees that surrounded their refuge came the glint of helmets and rifle-barrels, and they knew that they were isolated without any possible escape.

They were full of suspicion, and a French journalist, who had been seen the day before taking photographs which they thought might be used as evidence against them, barely escaped with his life from the fists of an enormous *terrassier*. They had no money and nothing to eat ; all the noisy agitators from Paris—at least one of whom was proved afterwards to have been in Government pay—



had deserted them, and there was nothing left for them but to sit still and await arrest. Yet their spirit was not broken, and they showed with a touch of pride a pathetic collection of head-gear picked up on the field of battle, blood-stained caps, bowler hats squashed by the flat or cut open by the edge of the cuirassiers' sabres, and a very ancient top-hat with a bullet-hole neatly drilled through it.

'We fought hard, you see,' said one of the men with a touch of pride. 'We collected them, and tore out and burnt their linings with the makers' names so that they might not give a clue to the police.'

They still believed in the idea that had driven them to a frenzied attack upon the forces of law and order, and still declared, with more or less confidence, that that very night the general strike would break out in Paris, the Republic would fall, and the victory of the Grand Soir would be theirs.

It was perhaps hardly surprising that, at the time, we did not realise how few these enthusiasts really were and how soon they were to be disillusioned by the penalties that were their invariable lot, while the organisers of disorder went scot-free.

Though M. Pataud had not yet been thrashed with a contemptuous umbrella on the open boulevard by a recalcitrant member of his syndicate, and still had power to plunge us all into darkness, we should, when we were prophesying over the wine and cigars, have remembered the French peasant, his long-suffering conservatism, his thrift, industry, and common-sense, qualities that run strong and deep in the nation, while the vapourings of demagogues and the boastful threats of paid agitators are no more than evanescent froth and foam.

Now that the General Confederation of Labour has shown itself once and for all a fraud and a failure, and revolutionary Syndicalism is found to be a purely artificial phenomenon, it is easy to see things in their true proportion and to realise that the true Syndicalist movement was to be sought not in the towns but in the country, not in the factory but in the fields—in the domain of agriculture, the vital industry of France.

Even in point of numbers, the Syndicalist movement in agriculture is far more powerful than elsewhere.

The General Confederation of Labour at its zenith never claimed more than 300,000 adherents, while to-day the Agricultural Syndicates unite nearly a million agriculturists.

To comprehend the fundamental difference between the true

Syndicalism and its spurious imitation, revolutionary Syndicalism, it is well to realise the part played by agriculture in the national life of France.

The writer travelled down to Nice for the Congress of Agricultural Syndicates, at which the words quoted at the beginning of this article were used, with an official of the Central Union of Syndicates, who is a native of Bordeaux, and, as the train drew out of the suburbs of Paris into the great cultivated plains which are the pride and wealth of France, the true note of agricultural Syndicalism was struck. 'Voilà!' said my Bordelais friend with a sweep of the hand, 'Voilà l'agriculture de la France.'

The tone in which these simple words were uttered was far more expressive than the words themselves. A gesture, which included all behind the distant horizon marked by neat lines of rigid poplars, all the cornland and pasture, all the vineyards and olive-groves, all the fields and gardens within the wide frontiers of France, expressed that traditional worship of the soil, that sense of the ever-recurring miracle of the crops and seasons and all those homely notions of thrift and daily toil in the fields, which the French peasant still seems to feel as keenly as the Greeks and Romans, who transformed these simple emotions into rustic deities.

It was the same conception of the earth as the source of all fruitfulness and prosperity which a few days later, as a motor-car carried the members of the Congress through the white bare hills which bar the approach to Guillaumes (a little village in the heart of the Alpes Maritimes), called from a veteran agriculturist, who hailed from the fertile valley of the Rhone, a poignant wail of 'Ah! cette terre, si nue, si blanche!'

The sight of uncultivated land was physical pain to him: he pestered everyone with questions to know if it were not possible to replant the barren hillsides with trees, and broke into a long, confused story of how somewhere in his beloved Beaujolais a naked slope had been transformed into what was almost a forest. When, before we reached Guillaumes, he observed a melancholy plantation of undersized pines struggling desperately for life on an inhospitable and stony crag, and he was told that it represented a State attempt at re-forestation, the worthy man's gratification knew no bounds, and he swept off his hat with all the seriousness of a soldier saluting a forlorn hope.

Such is the spirit of the men who have adopted the theories of Syndicalism, and who regard it not as an agent of revolution and class war, but as an agent of social peace.

'The Syndicalist, is the true Conservative with his root in the past and his goal in eternity.'

The men who at the Nice Congress applauded this sentiment to the echo were worthy representatives of the agriculture of France. There were delegates from nearly every province in the country—from distant Finisterre, from the Vosges, the Pyrenees, Lorraine, and the Departments of the Centre; while local representatives of Provence and the rich Riviera coast were present in force. Side by side were sitting a Breton vicomte, the owner of large estates and an historic title, a young artilleryman, much occupied with his cumbrous sabre, who was the secretary of a local syndicate, a wrinkled Provençal peasant for whom the olive-tree was a thing to worship and die for, a vivacious wine-grower from the Hérault, whose black imperial wagged with indignation if any incautious Northerner reminded him of the existence of those Algerian wines that are cheaper than the wines of the Midi, a taciturn potato-grower from the Vosges, who looked for all the world like a retired general, and, on the last chair of the row, a parish priest from Lorraine, who, in the defence of his syndicate, had conducted, without legal aid, ninety-eight lawsuits against the authorities and lost only fourteen of them.

No branch of agriculture was unrepresented, and the potato-grower of the Vosges and the breeder of Brittany frankly admitted that they had something to learn from the methods adopted by the olive-, wine-, and flower-growers of the South. No class distinction existed. Among the audience were to be seen weather-beaten peasants with deep-lined mahogany faces, who, clasping a huge umbrella, listened with all their ears to the doctrines of agricultural Syndicalism, farm-labourers, small-holders, farmers of every class, and great landlords, bearing historic names, who have not hesitated to set themselves at the head of a movement which is based on the common association of all interested in the tilling of the soil.

This national movement which has succeeded in combining, without distinction of class or politics or wealth, those for whom agriculture is not an abstraction to be discussed or written about, but a vital part of their daily lives, began by setting before itself a humble practical purpose.

When, in 1882, the law conferred the privilege of association, so jealously guarded by the legislators of the Revolution, upon professional syndicates, an amendment, carried without discussion at the last moment of the debate in the Upper House, extended

this privilege to the syndicates of agriculturists, and the French agriculturists were not slow to avail themselves of this advantage.

It is to the law of 1884 that revolutionary Syndicalism also owes its origin; but whilst its founders started from certain arbitrary notions, such as the inherent hostility of capital and labour, and set to work to make facts fit their theories, the Agricultural Syndicates took facts as they found them and concentrated their efforts on the defence of the peasant and the improvement of his moral and material condition.

Naturally enough, the material side of the Syndicalist movement took the form of co-operation.

Co-operative societies for fire and cattle insurance, for the supply of chemical manure and the latest agricultural machines and generally for the satisfaction of the special needs of the agriculturist, were formed by the local syndicates.

The movement was supported by the 'Société des Agriculteurs,' the association of the great French landowners, and it was thanks to its influence that no class distinction was recognised, and that labourer, peasant-farmer, 'métayer,' and landlord were all admitted to the syndicates, and thanks to its initiative that all the efforts of the local bodies were centralised in the Central Union of Agricultural Syndicates, which has its headquarters in Paris.

A complete organisation grew up.

In the commune, the small local syndicate founded the special co-operative societies needed in that particular place. These syndicates were grouped in district unions, which kept the syndicates in touch with one another and strengthened their co-operative action, in particular by re-insuring the risks accepted by their insurance co-operative societies.

Finally, the whole of this organisation was guided and directed by the Central Union.

The success of the movement soon led its chief exponents to deduce certain general ideas from the facts of their experience, and to raise on the foundation of the work accomplished a solid structure of theories and ideals.

Had they not done so, they would not be the brilliant enthusiastic Frenchmen that they are. The Syndicalist idea, which was at first concerned with particular individuals and particular localities, grew naturally into a national movement, and to-day the Central Union of Agricultural Syndicates identifies itself with the agriculture of France and extends its forethought for professional interests to the interests of its country.

During the Agadir crisis, its lecturers, after speaking on the usual technical subjects, perhaps in some remote village, would be questioned by the peasants as to the international situation, and when, in reply, they spoke of patriotism and the honour of France that must, if need be, be defended by force of arms, their audience would rise and cheer them to the echo.

Agricultural Syndicalism is essentially a patriotic movement and is never weary of reminding the individual that his welfare and prosperity depend on the welfare and prosperity of the nation.

It is also a non-party movement.

Everything that has to do with politics is regarded by the peasant with the deepest suspicion, and his confidence in the syndicate would be rudely shaken if he ever found that it had a finger in the political pie.

Complete political neutrality is the watchword of agricultural Syndicalism. Its adherents may be Socialists or Conservatives, Radicals or Royalists, Clericals or Anticlericals, provided that they are professionally interested in agriculture.

In the village syndicate, the political feeling that runs so high between the schoolmaster and the chemist, who are almost invariably the electoral agents of the Government candidate, and the parish priest, who is the representative of the reactionary parties, disappears, and the political opponents, brought into contact, learn to appreciate one another's good qualities.

The country curé is welcomed in the syndicate, as his superior education renders him an invaluable secretary, but any attempt on his part to use the syndicate for political or religious objects is promptly and sternly suppressed.

The Agricultural Syndicates have declared merciless hostility against all those petty intrigues and local jealousies which inspire the politics of the parish pump—'la politique du clocher.' A few senators and deputies play a part in the movement, but they are only admitted in their quality of agriculturists. Certain politicians would have been happy to obtain the support of a disciplined organisation which might, if it wished, control something like a million votes, but their advances have been politely and firmly brushed aside.

At a recent congress, a politician who began to glorify the work accomplished for agriculture by the Radical party was promptly called to order and reminded that the Radical party was an unknown quantity for agricultural Syndicalism.

As for the Republic, the leaders of the movement regard it with

benevolent neutrality so long as it does not interfere with their labours, but they are fully aware that Syndicalism would work equally satisfactorily in a kingdom or an empire.

The royalist *Action Française*, indeed, has adopted a large number of its doctrines of co-operative professional action which arise naturally out of the medieval guild system.

It must not be supposed that the political indifference of the Agricultural Syndicates implies that they are without influence on Parliament.

On the contrary, their influence, both in the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, is, in matters affecting agriculture, very great, and steadily increasing, though unseen. They have already laid the foundations of a system of professional representation, and they look forward to the time when the consultation of the Agricultural Syndicates shall be made obligatory before any bill affecting agriculture can pass into law, and when their organisation shall develop into an official system, representing the agricultural interests of the nation. They regard professional representation as the only remedy for 'la crise du parlementarisme,' about which so much has been written. Their leaders have supported the schemes of electoral reform based on proportional representation in the hope that they might do something to purify politics, but they only regard this reform as a preliminary step in the right direction. They hope some day to replace the representation of arbitrarily defined localities by the representation of professions and trades, each duly organised with its special syndicates and groups of syndicates.

An elector would vote as a banker or as a farmer or as a journalist, and not as a citizen of some electoral division, to the utter discomfiture of the professional politician.

The fundamental doctrines of Syndicalism and Socialism are irreconcilable. The Syndicalist bases his whole system on the encouragement of private initiative and leaves the widest autonomy to his local organisations. All his theories oppose the Socialist idea of State collectivism, and in the matter of agriculture he has already achieved considerable results in keeping State intervention within due limits. Independence, self-respect, and initiative are the qualities that he is endeavouring to cultivate in the nation, and he considers that these qualities are the first to disappear as soon as the idea of 'L'Etat-Providence' is accepted. Thanks to his efforts, the collectivist programme, if ever it, comes into the domain of practical politics, will find massed against it in a powerful organisation, all the forces of the peasants in France.

A natural corollary of this attitude in so highly centralised a country as France is a steady and untiring propaganda in favour of decentralisation.

The whole administrative system of France is concentrated in the Ministry of the Interior. The Minister of the Interior has as his direct subordinates the préfets, who are his agents in the eighty-six départements; they, in their turn, have as their subordinates the sous-préfets, in charge of the 362 arrondissements, and the last link in the chain consists of the mayors of the 36,192 communes of France. It is the perfection of this machine, which is at the disposal of the Government of the day, that causes the interference of party politics in every little local question and, reciprocally, the pernicious influence of local intrigues and jealousies on matters of national importance. To these abuses agricultural Syndicalism opposes its obstinate and organised resistance.

Above all things the Agricultural Syndicates are what would in English be called a school of character.

Their contribution to the material prosperity of French agriculture by their development of the co-operative system is expressed by a number of statistics, which are the surest demonstration of their vitality and activity.

Only the future can show if they are destined to found that abiding city which is their ideal—the State organised on a professional basis.

It was the writer's privilege to see for himself, at the Nice Congress of Agricultural Syndicates, the work that they had already accomplished in developing the intelligence, unselfishness, and national feeling of the peasant by teaching him the dignity of his profession, and showing him that he was working not only for himself, but for his fellows and his country.

The political situation provided an excellent test; the Three Years' Service Bill had not been voted, and perhaps those who have never been called upon to pay with their persons what the French call 'l'impôt du sang' do not realise how vitally such a matter affects every citizen of France, and how self-sacrificing must be the spirit of a democratic country which is disposed to accept cheerfully so heavy an addition to its burdens.

The subject was discussed over the coffee and liqueurs in a little café at St. Raphaël, where some forty members of the congress were taking refreshment after a strenuous visit to the local co-operative institutions.

A small-holder from the Vosges, a man of imposing appearance



taciturn and phlegmatic, with fierce military moustaches, who had come a two days' journey to attend the congress, started the conversation. 'What do you Southerners think of the Three Years' Service Bill?' he asked, and then, as no one immediately replied, he went on, 'We in the Vosges are ready. I have two sons who have not yet done their Service, but . . . nous sommes prêts.'

A Southerner accepted the challenge. Small, vivacious, and talkative, with a little imperial that accentuated his swarthy complexion, he was the proprietor of a vineyard in the Hérault and a perfect specimen of the vigneron of the Midi, in every way a complete contrast to the man of the eastern frontier who had been the first to speak. With a wave of the hand he dismissed the Three Years' Service Bill as if it were of no more importance than that Algerian wine which the vigneron of the Midi hates so cordially because it competes with his own.

'Never fear,' he said airily; 'that will be all right. We of the Midi are supposed to be wildly excitable and terrible revolutionaries. I admit we have occasionally forgotten law and order when we found that we were being ruined by these abominable Algerian wines and those fraudulent concoctions they make in Paris. But at bottom we are sound enough and very patriotic. You will find no shirkers in the Hérault when it comes to meeting the military preparations of Germany. Our young men will serve their three years without a word of complaint, and I am not at all sure that they will not be all the better for it.'

'Ay,' said the man from the Vosges in his laconic way, 'better serve for three years and wear the French *képi*, than serve for two years and wear the spiked helmet of Germany.'

'True,' said a delegate from Nancy, 'we of the eastern frontier learnt our lesson in 1870, and we have not forgotten.'

At the side of the vigneron of Hérault was sitting the president of one of the wine-growers' syndicates which was supposed to be the most advanced and revolutionary of all those represented at the congress. He had created a sensation in Paris, a little time before, by declaring that the Midi would rise as one man and fight to the death against the Government and the rest of France, if the least-favoured-nation treatment were not imposed on Algerian wines, and if such stringent regulations were not devised for Morocco that it would be practically impossible to grow wine there at all. As far as wine was concerned he was an uncompromising revolutionary, but when it came to the national question of three years' service he said not a word in objection to the patriotic sentiments

of his friend from the Hérault, and merely confirmed them with vigorous nods that set his long beard floating in the air.

A Nice representative, who was sitting opposite, broke into the conversation. He had not yet done his military service and was not best pleased at the idea of serving an extra year.

'It is not amusing,' he remarked, 'to spend three years in barracks, but, all the same, since we must, *nous marcherons!*'

An eager youth, who was next to him, declared himself absolutely delighted.

'I have always been mad about the army,' he said, 'and I should have volunteered for three years' service last year, if it had not been for my mother, who is a widow. No one can become a thorough soldier in less than three years, and if one has not learnt to be a thorough soldier one never gets the right outlook on life in the rest of one's existence.'

The writer then turned to a vigneron from the Marseilles district on his right, who had remained silent throughout the discussion, and asked him his opinion. He was a magnificent specimen of the Southern peasant—his deep-lined face burnt mahogany-colour with the sun that ripened his grapes and olives, his hair snow-white as befitted his seventy years, and his dark eyes peering keenly from beneath eyebrows that were nearly as bushy as his moustache.

With true peasant's caution, he thought the question over carefully, almost as carefully as he had considered which he should choose of the half-dozen wines that were offered him, weighing thoughtfully what possible interest a foreigner could have in asking such a question, and making up his mind as to whether that interest might be contrary to his own. When this important mental operation had been accomplished, he remarked, 'Three years' service—they don't like it.'

After a pause, he added, 'At least, if they don't mind now, they won't like it later.'

After this oracular utterance, he took a deep draught of wine and shook his head over it sadly, as if it were a mere caricature of the nectar that his own vineyard produced. Then he retired into the impenetrable silence which he had maintained throughout the whole of the congress. From first to last it was only the twinkle of his shrewd eyes, or a smile that twisted all his wrinkles into new and complicated patterns, which showed that he was taking an intense interest in all the proceedings.

The non-committal reply of the Marseilles vigneron was caught up by a rich landowner from the Eastern Pyrenees, a man of seventy,

who for thirty years had devoted his life to the cause of Syndicalism and had never lost an opportunity of grumbling at himself and his countrymen.

'Just at present,' he grunted, 'they are charmed with the idea of a third year in barracks, but we shall see. . . . The young men of to-day are worth nothing; they change their minds before they have made them up!'

'Come, M. L.,' said a delegate from the Rhone valley, 'you know that you are always complaining that nothing can make the peasant change his mind when once it is made up. Besides, if you had not believed in the young men of your part of the world you would never have given up your life to your syndicate as you have done.'

'That only proves,' was the reply, 'that I am a stupid old fool, and I very much doubt if the new generation is any wiser than I am.'

As a matter of fact, the tone in which M. L. grumbled was in itself an admission that the young men of the Pyrenees were ready to accept the sacrifice that France demanded.

After luncheon, the discussion continued in one of the large motor-cars that were conveying us to the inspection of a co-operative dairy, buried in the heart of the mountains.

'What,' asked a Bordelais of a Breton, who was sitting beside him, 'do the people of your part of the world in Finisterre think of the Government's proposals?'

'There will be no opposition at all in Brittany,' was the reply; 'our people say, of course, that they would prefer to serve for two years, but that, since it is necessary, they are quite ready to give an additional year of their lives to France. As a matter of fact, there is very little self-sacrifice in it at all. Every Breton admits that "*on est très bien au régiment*," and the elder men would simply laugh if their sons complained. "*Ben!*" they would say, "*ils feront comme nous*." My deputy'—he mentioned the name of a member of the French Academy, one of the most respected politicians in France—'asked me the other day whether the vigorous campaign he has been carrying on in favour of the Army Bill will have done him any harm in the constituency. I told him at once that it would have quite the contrary effect. The only opposition will come from the departments of the South-west, that are rotten with politics and have nothing to fear from a German invasion.'

'Excuse me,' said the Bordelais indignantly, 'you are quite mistaken. I think you must forget that I come from Bordeaux.'

We, Girondins, are all of us patriots, and at heart we have always been Moderates. Bordeaux, through its municipal council, was the first town to declare in favour of three years' service.'

'I apologise,' said the Breton, smiling; 'we are all inclined to imagine that it is only the departments about which we know nothing that are opposed to the Army Bill.'

At this point, a great landowner of the Central Departments interposed. 'In my district,' he said, 'the peasants are ready to serve for three years, because they are convinced that it is the only way of preventing war with Germany. They would do anything to prevent France being involved in another war. The peasants are not enthusiastic at the prospect of three years' service, but they will do their duty cheerfully. . . . I do not understand why some people are complaining that a wave of patriotism has not swept over the country at the idea of an extra year's military service. If you remember, we were patriotic enough when we were with the colours, but we used to count the days till we should be free of the regiment, and we certainly should not have been enthusiastic at the notion of a third year in barracks. It is not as though everyone was worked up to a white-hot pitch of patriotism by some great national peril.'

'Surely,' said the Bordelais, 'the present attitude of France is infinitely better. There is no talk of *revanche*, and we shall not make the mistake a second time of bragging that we intend to march into Berlin. France is determined to defend herself if she is attacked and to make, quite cheerfully, every sacrifice that may be necessary, though, naturally, we should prefer not to make sacrifices. This is a state of mind that will last. Wild enthusiasm would soon pass away.'

As M. Delalande, the President of the Central Union of Agricultural Syndicates, said, in his speech at the banquet of the congress: 'In every agriculturist slumbers a soldier and, when necessity compels him to exchange the ploughshare for the sword, a good soldier, since he fights to defend the soil that he loves so well.'

It is this spirit that the true Syndicalism encourages and develops, and it is as a school of character, patriotism, and self-sacrifice, and not only for the material advantages which it has conferred on French agriculture, that it has earned the gratitude of the nation.

H. WARNER ALLEN.

*THE WITCH OF KANDOR.*

CHARTERIS, District Commissioner, who had for some months been in possession of a little mud fort situated some hundreds of miles within the interior of the Gold Coast Colony, received one fine April morning, at the hands of a worn-out runner, orders to evacuate his post and go down at once to Cape Coast Castle. Without more ado he summoned the king and chiefs of the neighbourhood, paraded his soldiers, made a speech, called for three cheers, detached the little Union Jack from its bamboo staff and stuffed it into his pocket, said good-bye to the king and the chiefs, and walked off.

His first objective was Kumassi, two hundred miles and more away; his second Cape Coast Castle, another hundred and fifty, and all these miles had to be traversed on foot. For eight months he had not seen a white face, his underclothes had so shrunk that they had become inadequate for a child of twelve, his boots had burst, his stores were finished, his leave was almost due, and the rainy season was approaching. He had every inducement to hurry. He covered the coarse grassy plain at a great speed.

But as he went the country began to change. The dull dusty tussocks were replaced by small bushy trees the size of English hawthorns. A couple of tornadoes broke. At once the young grass pushed up myriads of tender green blades. Twelve hours' rain and the wilderness blossomed. The little trees put forth their buds, the grass grew as one looked, and with the appearance of the green herb there appeared also the game. Charteris saw it on all sides.

But he hardened his heart and turned not aside. If there was rain in the plains there was more in the forest. He must reach Kumassi before the streams should fill the swamps.

One afternoon, however, on reaching the tiny hamlet of Kandor he halted. The Kroom, as such a place is called, lay in a beautiful verdured district lightly timbered. A little river ran rapidly by, there was everything the wild creatures could desire. Charteris saw them all around him. Big deer, antelope, birds of all kinds. He was in a paradise of game.

Now he had come so fast that he felt himself able to spare a day. The great forest was close before him. A week or a little more would see him at Kumassi. Therefore he pitched his tent

n the open not a quarter of a mile from the Kroom. He sent forward most of his carriers and all the soldiers but six ; these, with their sergeant, old Ali Baba, he kept with him, for the forest, though not unsafe, was sometimes unquiet.

It was drawing towards evening by the time that the last of the Hausas and carriers, walking as always in single file, disappeared among the trees, and then he sent Quashie his servant for the chief of the Kroom.

This man proved to be a handsome intelligent youth who knew nothing of white men. He explained that he was the son of a neighbouring king and that he and his hunters only came to the village at certain times of the year, and having admired and wondered at the .303 sporting carbine he willingly agreed to accompany Charteris on a hunt ; and so, with Quashie as interpreter, they set out forthwith.

But the evening proved dreadfully disappointing. There was any quantity of game. Charteris was nearly knocked down by the smell from a great pile of heads and horns. The compounds of the huts were full of drying venison, and there were quite fresh marks of elephant. But actually he got only one shot. In truth the hunters obtained their game almost entirely by driving and trapping, nor had he the skill to push and crawl in silence. Though he saw forms loom up vague and shadowy in the gloom, and though his two keen-visioned excited companions constantly pointed among the bushes, he only fired once, and that at an indistinct grey lump, which, after the .303 bullet had passed over it, p unged away with a snort. But though he got nothing, he saw what possibilities the place possessed and felt keener than ever. He made Quashie arrange to meet the young chief at daybreak, and after a friendly good-night walked back to his tent filled with anticipation.

That night, despite the fatigue induced by the march and the hunt, he could not sleep. It was bright moonlight, the wind stirred the trees, the beauty of the night kept him awake. The moon was beginning to go down before drowsiness came upon him and he dropped off. He had not been asleep, so it seemed to him, more than a few minutes, when he woke with a start. Some one in the village was crying out in distress. While he strained his ears other voices joined in the lament. Charteris understood. The women were wailing. Some one was dead. He went out. The wind had died away ; the countryside, save for the crying, was quiet. Day was just breaking, and he was standing listening,

wondering what had happened and what the time was, and whether the young chief was even then preparing for the morning's sport, when a violent shouting broke out, and a tumult.

Soon a little figure appeared racing towards him, hotly pursued by a hue and cry. The quarry twisted and turned and then made straight for the tent. But fast as it ran, the pursuers were faster; it had just time to reach Charteris and fall at his feet when both he and it were overwhelmed and thrown down and rolled over.

Now Charteris, by reason of his white skin, and of his position, and of his travelling with Hausas, was accustomed to deferential treatment. He scrambled up shouting to his assailants to get back. But he was tumbled off his feet again, and was in danger of serious injury, when Quashie and the sergeant and his men arrived all out of breath, and then matters arranged themselves. Charteris found himself fronting a crowd of infuriated hunters who were being kept off by the soldiers.

Before he could speak he felt something clutch his leg. Looking down, he saw the oldest and most wrinkled and most dilapidated old woman he had ever seen. Her head was quite bald and her bones were breaking through her skin. She was naked save for a dirty old faded cloth. Never had Charteris beheld so wretched, so miserable, so squalid an old woman, and with all his anger he could not help feeling sorry for her. Then he turned upon the hunters.

'What's all this?' he demanded savagely.

For a moment no one answered. The old woman stroked his leg, and turning her head grinned toothlessly up at him. A hunter stepped forward and held up his hand. He was in a frenzy of rage and fear. The sweat was pouring off him, his speech was hardly intelligible, but the uneasy demeanour of the soldiers showed that his words carried weight.

Quashie interpreted. 'He says, Sah, this old woman is a witch. He says, Sah, she has killed a man just now in the village!'

'Done *what*!' cried Charteris.

'One hour ago, Sah, she turn into a snake and bite a man and he die. Now the people want to kill her. She run to you, and now they demand her. They want her back.'

'The man is dead?' cried Charteris.

'Yes, Sah! She bite him.' Quashie eyed the old woman with horror. 'She is a witch. She bite him and kill him!'

Charteris kicked his leg clear and looked round him. It was



barely light and the figures round him were dim and hazy. He pulled himself together.

'Go now,' he said, 'the moon is sinking. I will look into the matter when the day has come. Go now, I say!'

At this, tumult again broke out. But for his escort, Charteris, in spite of his white skin, would have furnished another example of a man perishing through not minding his own business. But the reputation of the Hausas is a high one. They drew their sharp-pointed knives. The hunters were unarmed and gave way. They went off back to Kandor shouting, and when they entered it the wailing broke out afresh.

'What shall *we* do, sir?' said Ali Baba, the sergeant.

'Go to your huts. Stay, though . . . the hunters——!'

'They will not come back, sir. And the day is coming.' He saluted. Then he and his six men were lost in the darkness. Charteris entered the tent and sat down on the camp-bed. He shouted for Quashie, but no one answered. The boy had gone with the soldiers. The light was yet weak, but he could just distinguish the huddled squatting form of the old woman he had saved. Drowsiness overwhelmed him. He fell back and in a minute was sound asleep.

It was broad daylight when he sat up and rubbed his eyes. No one had been near him. He called angrily for Quashie, but without result. His sleep had been so profound that the events of the night had gone from his mind. He went out, but no one was to be seen. The Kroom was silent. He could hear no voices, see no smoke. Then something rustled. A head was protruded round the tent corner, and the old woman crawled into view. Charteris suddenly remembered and jumped back. The witch crept on her stomach to him and clutched his leg. For the first time he saw her clearly. She was even more wretched and dilapidated than he had thought, and she had lost an eye. As he stood looking down on her some one called. He saw Quashie hovering about a little way off.

'Come here, confound you!' Charteris cried, shaking off the old woman. 'What are you afraid of? Where's my tea? What are you shivering about? What does all this mean?'

Quashie came up and fell on his knees. In a broken voice he poured out what he had learnt in the Kroom.

'One month ago, Sah, 'bout,' he said, 'this old woman come here. She tell the chief "I am a witch!" She take the best hut,

the best meat, she make the hunters' wives fetch her water and cook for her. Everyone fear her and do what she tell them.'

'What, that wretched old thing?' said Charteris, touching the hag with his foot.

'When anything vex her, Sah, she stop the hunting until they appease her with money, and no one know what to do.' Quashie hesitated. 'And this is why everyone fear her so bad. When the sun go down she have power over all the snakes and all the pattacoos—hyenas you call them, Sah—until the morning come again, and then, Sah, she get no more power till the next night.'

'What rubbish!' said Charteris, intolerant and contemptuous of what he did not understand.

'It is true, Sah. One day some one vex her. That night they see two big white hyena chasing the game; and yet, Sah, no pattacoos live 'bout here. When they look in her house they see her asleep on the floor. But the pattacoo be her all the same. She hunt the game away. It no come back for one week. 'Nother day she quarrel with a woman. In the night the woman hear her chickens squeak, and go out. Big black cobra jump up and hunt her. She just get back when she tumble down. Her husband run out, but the snake be gone. She die of fear—almost. They look in the old woman's house. There she be asleep. But she be the snake all right. Oh, yes, Sah. It be true!'

'Bosh!' said Charteris. 'You're a lot of cowards.'

'Wait, Sah! Oh wait! There is one more thing. Last night she kill the young chief.'

'What,' cried Charteris. 'Is *that* true? Where *is* the chief?'

'He dead, Sah. Last night, when he leave us, this woman met him. She say she don't want white men here. He must drive us from the Kroom. The chief tell her to go away. He say he like you, and laugh. I think p'raps he drink a little rum. Then she laugh too. When everyone asleep she coil herself up outside his house. Soon he come out and step on her and she bite him. He cry "The witch bite me! The witch bite me! Oh, I die!" Then everyone run up. They not see the snake, but they see the teeth-mark. Then the chief die and they run to her house, and there be the old woman asleep. They try to catch her to kill her, but she slip away. She run to you and you save her!'

'Is the chief really dead?' said Charteris.

'I speak the truth, Sah. Here come the hunters, Sah, and the soldiers. Oh, Sah, give her up before she do more wicked things!'

Charteris saw the men approaching. They were carrying something. He also saw that the soldiers had their carbines, the sun was glinting on the bayonets.

'They bring the dead chief,' said Quashie solemnly.

The hunters laid the swollen body down before Charteris. The marks of the fangs were quite plain on the left ankle. The men were perfectly quiet and took no notice of the witch. Charteris felt there would be no need of the Hausas.

'The head-man asks you,' said Quashie, 'if the old woman is to be given to them?'

'No!' said Charteris, after a minute's pause. 'No!'

One of the hunters called a loud call. Women and children, bearing loads, came out from Kandor. The men picked up the dead body. Charteris saw it was slung on to a pole. Then men, women, and children departed in silence. He watched the body borne on its bearers' heads, swinging from its pole, till it dwindled in the distance and disappeared.

'They have gone back to their country,' said Quashie. 'You will not give them the witch. This Kroom is cursed. They will never come back.'

Charteris turned to the sergeant.

'It is no use staying here,' he said, 'we will march after breakfast. Why, there are only five men. Where's the other?'

'Corporal Fulani<sup>1</sup> hurt his knee last night when we leave you. P'raps, sir, you let him have the hammock to-day? To-morrow he can walk,' the sergeant said.

Charteris hesitated. Though good-natured, he did not want to walk all day in the sun, nor did he want to leave the corporal behind; there was no need for such haste. He would wait the day, and so he told the sergeant.

'We will stay till to-morrow, then, as I meant to do,' he said. At this the sergeant's face changed. His yellow eyeballs turned red, his lips curled in a snarl, he protruded his grey chin-beard, he bent down and shook his fist in the crouching old woman's face.

'What does he say, Quashie?' asked Charteris, aghast at the sergeant's behaviour.

'He tell her, Sah, that we got to stay here one more night. He say if she come near him or his men he shoot her dead.'

Charteris stared. This then, was the reason why the sergeant wanted to hurry—to avoid the spending of another night in the old woman's company. That Quashie and the hunters, negroes

<sup>1</sup> Pronounced Foo'larni.

of the forest, dominated by their terrors of fetish, should be terrified out of their wits he could quite understand, but that Sergeant Ali Baba, a good Mohammedan, a pure-blooded Hausa of the plains, whose very usefulness consisted in his contempt and hatred for the idolaters of the forest—that *he* should be so terror-smitten was incomprehensible, and in his surprise and annoyance he turned unjustly upon the sergeant.

‘What! You afraid of an old woman?’ he cried. ‘I didn’t think you were a coward!’

‘For twenty years I have served the Government,’ said the sergeant; ‘I have four medals and five wounds. I am no coward. But this is an evil thing. She killed the chief hunter and must herself be killed. If you do not kill her you will be sorry.’

‘You can go. We march to-morrow,’ said Charteris curtly, and Sergeant Ali Baba saluted and departed.

The day was broiling. By the time Charteris had eaten, the day had become broiling hot. With his own hands he fed the old woman and brought her water from the river. When she had finished he called Quashie to him.

‘Now, Quashie,’ he said, ‘tell her she can go.’

Quashie interpreted. The old woman mumbled in reply.

‘She says, Sah, she is not going!’

The boy’s terrors were so evident that his master shouted with mirth.

‘Tell her, then,’ he said, ‘to go away from the tent. I won’t have her here.’

The old woman moved obediently away and squatted under a tree a hundred yards off. She pulled her disreputable old cloth over her head and squatted motionless, like some monstrous fungus.

Charteris set himself to drowse away the hot hours. There was almost a complete silence, for as the sun approached the zenith the breeze died away and everything went into hiding. Not a locust whirred or cicada sang. The land and its creatures endured the heat in silence. Through the doorway he could see the witch under the tree, and he fell to pondering. One thing only in the queer business bothered him. The arrival of the old woman, her practising on the innate superstitions of the hunters—quite explicable. The exercise of her alleged powers—coincidences, nothing more. The death of the young chief also a coincidence. If he had not drunk rum he would have avoided the snake. Then the panic and departure of the hunters—a natural sequence. All these things were clearly explicable. But the terror of the sergeant was not. As

has been said, he and his kind were superior, or should be superior, to such alarms. The fetish ruled and bullied the Gold Coast, but the sergeant only jeered at it and its symbols, smashed them and spat on them; yet here he was, so frightened at the mere prospect of passing a night in the old woman's vicinity, that he had suggested Charteris's giving up his hammock to Corporal Fulani, who would be quite able to march on the morrow. The thought for a moment came to Charteris, sublime in his self-sufficiency, that there might be something in this business of which he had no inkling. But he thrust the thought aside. It was all coincidence; nothing but coincidence.

The hot hours wore slowly away. The land gradually cooled, but there were none of the pleasant little incidents usual to an African evening. No chattering or laughing in the Kroom, no concourse of women with the black water-pots at the river, no smell of wood fires. Truly the hunters had gone, but the Hausas should have been in evidence wandering about, washing or getting their food. Charteris reflected he had not caught a glimpse of them since the morning. The whole day, indeed, had been curiously silent. Not a wayfarer had passed; not an animal or bird had moved. Even now, though the sun was sinking and the river called the thirsty creatures to refreshment, not one appeared. Indeed, there was no living thing in sight save the old woman, and she might as well have been dead, Charteris thought, so motionless was she under the shady tree. The depression of a lonely evening came upon him. He felt he had made a mistake in stopping at the pretty little Kroom. He had better have gone straight through to Kumassi. He had interrupted his march for nothing and scattered his carriers.

'I will leave at seven sharp, or before if I can,' he said, 'and try and catch the others up.'

He sat and smoked and thought till the shadows lengthened and the short twilight drew on. A few stars jumped out, then Quashie approached through the dusk. At the same moment the old woman got up and came to him and muttered.

'She asks, Sah, where she is to sleep.'

'Sleep!' said Charteris. 'Where she likes, but she'll have to get away from here. And do you pack up everything. I'm going to start early to-morrow. I've had enough of this place.'

'Oh, go now! go now!' cried Quashie, his eyes swimming; 'the dark comes, but we all march together and we all keep awake. Oh go, Sah! To-night the moon is very bright!'

He wiped his eyes and began to pack a box. Again the old woman muttered something.

'She says she is afraid to sleep in the open. She thinks the hunters might come back, and they hate her. She demands a house.

'Well, let her take one. The Kroom's full of them. What is she worrying me for? I've nothing to do with her. Tell her to go away.

'She says, Sah, you saved her life.'

'Well! Tell her that doesn't mean I'm going to look after her for ever. Send her off.'

'She says, Sah, she will never leave you!'

Quashie in his agitation dropped and broke the only remaining plate. Charteris lost his temper.

'Look here,' he said, 'I've had enough of this. There's been nothing but trouble ever since I saw her. I saved her life because I didn't want to have an old woman murdered before my eyes. But that's all. I don't want to see her any more! Tell her to be off!'

The old woman scowled. The dull pupil in her one bleared eye cleared and brightened and glistened. Then it dulled again.

'She ask you if you mean that, Sah.'

'Certainly I do,' said Charteris.

The old woman muttered again, looked at him, and slowly departed towards the Kroom.

'She said, Sah, "That light is light and dark is dark."'

'Go on with your packing,' said his master impatiently, 'if you haven't smashed everything.'

Quashie soon finished. There was but little indeed to pack. Charteris, as he watched his scanty belongings being thrown into the box, reflected that it was fortunate Kumassi was not far distant.

Quashie fastened down the box and presently went off, but his master sat on smoking. The tropical moonlight night divides itself into three portions: The first, the dark hours, the darker for the light that is coming. Then the great flood of moonshine, Then the dull grey twilight melting into the dawn; and the brighter the moonlight the more intense is the preceding blackness.

It was very dark, and finding that Quashie did not return, he lit the faithful hurricane lantern and walked to the Kroom. In spite of the light he carried he stumbled over the bushes, and in the village itself he could hardly find his way. He groped round among deserted houses, broken walls, and mud corners till he reached the half a dozen huts where the Hausas had quartered themselves.

He found nothing but darkness ; the whole place seemed deserted ; but he thought he heard a voice whispering. As he stood listening and wondering, some one rushed into the circle of light. It was Quashie carrying his sleeping-mat.

' Well ? ' said Charteris. ' Where is the sergeant ? What has become of the soldiers ? '

Quashie did not speak. His face looked grey in the flicker of the lantern-light. He pointed to the house where the voice had whispered.

' What, in there ? All of them ? ' Charteris said in a low voice.

' Yes, Sah. Sergeant Ali Baba too. They eat no food. They make no fires. They watch. I come with you, Sah. I not stay here ! '

Charteris stared at him and lifted the light. The high narrow walls and roofs threw such queer shadows that he could not read the boy's face.

' Where's Fulani, the sick corporal ? ' he said.

' In here, Sah. Sergeant put him here so he can sleep while they watch.' The boy pointed to a hut standing a little apart. Charteris pushed open the door. Sure enough the corporal was stretched out on his mat fast asleep.

' And—and where's the old woman ? ' he whispered.

Quashie pointed. ' She come, Sah,' he said, ' and take that house. When she do that the sergeant call his men and go into his hut and shut the door. They have been there all the time since.'

Charteris went to the hovel pointed out by Quashie. It stood some twenty yards apart from the others. He pushed the door open. The lantern-light showed him the old woman squatting on her hams under a ragged hole that served as window. Her cloth was over her head again, and she did not move.

He shut the door, and, with Quashie carrying the lamp, returned to the tent.

For the first time the fact that the men who usually feared nothing were absolutely terrified came home to him. Nothing short of that would have induced the sergeant, an aristocrat, to herd with men, who, while of the same faith, would in his own country be his serfs. Charteris knew that.

When the tent was reached Quashie spread his mat on the ground in the doorway. Charteris lay down on the bed determined to get off to sleep before the moon should rise. For a while all



was still ; then, just as he was losing consciousness, there came from very far away, very faintly yet quite distinctly, a long howling cry.

He was wide awake in an instant.

'What's that?' he called.

There was no answer. He thought Quashie must be asleep, and was glad of it. The cry was not repeated. His nerves calmed down, and he was on the point of dropping off when a voice trembling with terror said in his ear :

'That—that be the cry of a pattacoo, and oh ! oh ! none of them live near this place.'

'Get back to the door!' shouted the startled and angry Charteris, 'or I'll drive you away altogether.'

He lay down again. For the third time he tried to sleep, and this time succeeded.

But he could only have slept a very short time, when, exactly as had happened on the previous evening, he was suddenly and startlingly awakened. Again some one was crying from the village. He ran to the tent-door and listened. The sleeping-mat was there, but Quashie was missing. There was no one to be seen. The noise grew louder ; the shouting and cursing of frightened and angry men. The sky was as yet quite dark. He slipped on his boots, grabbed the lantern, whose light had not been extinguished, and ran to the Kroom as fast as he could. As he ran he saw the moon was close on her rising.

Lights were moving wildly in the village when he entered. Again he ran and stumbled among the alleys and broken houses to the soldiers' quarters. He heard the wild shouting and savage disconnected threats and a monotonous crying. He turned a corner and saw, outside the hut where the sick corporal Fulani had lain, the sergeant and his men running about waving pieces of lighted wood. Close by stood Quashie, the tears running down his face.

None of them took any notice of his arrival ; but, in response to his shouted query, Quashie pointed with trembling hands to the open door of the hut. Charteris dashed in. The lantern rays showed him Corporal Fulani lying dead on the floor with his throat torn out.

A deadly sickness fell on Charteris. He stumbled out and leaned against the wall, shivering and feeling very ill. Before he could control himself the sergeant sprang in front of him.

'This thing happened through you,' he said. 'I warn you.

I tell you. But you would not hear. The hunters tell you. But for you they would have killed her last night. You saved her. Your servant Quashie tell you. I tell you. We say "Kill her or go away." You say "No!" You would not listen. Now the corporal is lying dead!

The sergeant stopped and wiped his streaming face. The soldiers brought out the corporal's mangled body, laid it down and put a cloth over it.

'But why did you leave him by himself? Oh, why did you not keep the watch!' said Charteris in a whisper.

'Always we put a sick man by himself,' cried the sergeant, wildly waving his arms, 'and we keep the watch. But we look for snake; we not think of this!'

'Did no one see anything?' asked Charteris, finding his voice at last.

'Only this. We see nothing. We hear the corporal scream. We run to him. Then we see the shadow of something slip by. That is all.'

'And the old woman? Who has been to her house?'

'No one, sir. No one yet has gone.'

'Come on,' said Charteris. At this moment the great moon, risen at last, sailed up over the tree-tops and shone directly down into the Kroom. The squalid huts and yards turned to abodes of silvery beauty. The rays came down in floods of such clear light that he could see the men's faces as plainly as in the broad day. He saw the tears shine like dewdrops on Quashie's cheeks. Thinking matters over afterwards, Charteris felt that nothing in the night's adventure had irritated him so much as those tears sparkling in the moonlight.

He laid his hand on the door of the old woman's hut. He was brave and in good health, but it cost him an effort to push it open. His throat was dry and his arm felt powerless. There was the old woman just as he had left her, crouched under the window. He pulled off her cloth. She was rigid as a board. He thought she was dead.

'She is in a devil sleep,' said the sergeant. 'I ask leave for to shoot her before she wakes!'

'No!' said Charteris.

The sergeant turned abruptly and gave a curt order to his men. Charteris saw Quashie start.

'We will put the corporal in a hut and pull the walls on him,'

the sergeant said, 'then we will march. We will stay here no longer.'

Here was conflict between black and white. Charteris's hammock-men were not to be seen. For all he knew they had deserted, scared by the second death. Even if he abandoned everything and went as he was, he could not keep up with the Hausas. They would slip through the forest before them like wolves, in their haste to get away from the accursed village. The sergeant, putting all the blame for this business on the white man's obstinacy and stupidity, would not consider him at all. He would not hurt him, but he would leave him. And yet the alternative was impossible. Charteris knew that. An idea came to him.

'Sergeant Ali!' he said, 'wait! I am an Englishman, a Government officer. I cannot see a wretched old woman murdered before my eyes. But I will do this. It will soon be daylight. Take her to my tent. Stay here yourself in the Kroom. I myself will guard her till daybreak.'

The sergeant hesitated. A loud noise sounded close by. 'That is the house falling on the corporal,' he said. 'With that in your ears will you guard her?'

'Yes,' said Charteris.

'Very well, sir,' said the sergeant; 'but I warn you once more. Some evil thing will come of it. Let me kill her now!'

Charteris shook his head. The sergeant called to his men.

'Take this woman to the tent,' he ordered. Three times he spoke. Charteris realised it was only the sergeant's prestige as an aristocrat of his race that made his men at last obey him. They ran in on the old woman, roughly grabbed her and rushed her away to the tent, bumping her head on the hard ground. Charteris with Quashie followed hot-foot. Never did he forget that scurry through the white night.

The sergeant and his men disappeared. Quashie followed. His sobbing could still be heard after his form was lost in the white mistiness.

Charteris pulled the bed out of the tent and pushed the stiff body which had remained where it had fallen, inside. The old woman's trance, if trance it were, was profound. He placed the bed across the opening and sat down. He and the old woman were alone together. He lit a cigarette and smoked it slowly, pondering, reviewing the whole uncanny business. Why had the pretty little Kroom where he had expected to find so much

enjoyment suddenly become a theatre of tragedies ? That the death of the pleasant young chief was but a coincidence, Charteris was still quite convinced. A chance threat, a rum-bottle, and a black cobra, had coincided. But how had Corporal Fulani died ? Charteris saw again the poor soldier lying in his blood. Something had killed him, but why had not the sergeant and his men who were watching seen that something ? Was it only coincidence, this second death ? A horrid feeling of nervousness came upon him. The moonlight was wonderful ; never had he known what ' floods of light ' meant before ; but the stillness was appalling. When some small creature fell from a bough it made a thud that quite startled him.

He sat on for a long time smoking and thinking. Excitement had kept him going, but now he began to feel sleepy. The cigarette fell from his fingers and he was not aware he had dropped it. He sat and drowsed, and nodded and drowsed. His watch had months ago been left at the bottom of a river. He did not know what the time might be. At last he roused himself. He thought it must be very late ; for the land was growing white with the dead misty whiteness which, as has been said, the tropic moon leaves behind her and which precedes the dawn.

There seemed nothing whatever to be afraid of. The night was fast wearing away in utter peace. Charteris told himself he was a fool to be nervous and that it was fully time he should get some sleep. He looked into the tent. There was the old woman stretched out upon the ground, stiff and motionless. He laid himself upon the camp-bed and was in the act of settling down, when something arrested his attention, and he unconsciously sniffed the heavy air. A smell, harsh and unpleasant, very faint but very pronounced, had stolen over the plain to him. It reminded him in a vague way of marshy sun-smitten lagoon beds. The leaves on the trees were quite quiet. There was no breeze to carry any smell, there was nothing to cause any so far as he could see, but there it was forcing itself upon his notice. He stared round him. What was this that was coming over the plain through the hot still night ?

All of a moment he thought he saw some distance away a shadow move, then another and another and yet another. Then he saw them rising on all sides ; wherever he looked he saw them. Pale shadows, twisting, turning, mingling with the darker shadows of the night. The whole misty plain seemed to move and be alive. The sour smell thickened and grew fetid, choking, overpowering.

Charteris gasped in his bewilderment and held his nose. And then, as he stared, the flickering ghostly things suddenly drew in and became more definite, and with a great gulp of dismay he realised that what he had mistaken for shadows were the forms of great light-coloured hyenas, hundreds on hundreds of them, advancing upon the tent in long lines. They made no sound, he could hear no footfall, but he could see them and—smell them! He ran round the tent. There they were. Masses of them, creeping up upon him.

Still he was not frightened. He stood stock-still watching the coming hordes. Quashie's words came into his mind, and he kept on repeating aloud 'No pattacoos live about here! No pattacoos live about here!' It even struck him as curious how distinctly he could see them in the dull light. Now he saw their eyes and teeth. They were quite close. Then one great brute threw up her head and sidled towards him, bared her fangs and howled, the long howling cry he had heard from far away across the plain before the death of the corporal but a few hours before.

Then panic seized upon him. He realised in a flash where he was and what was happening. His hair crawled upon his head. He was too frightened even to try to run. These things were coming for him. He, too, would be found with his throat torn out! He sprang into the tent and seized the old woman by the neck, shouting 'Stop this! Stop this! Wake up! Wake!' He pinched and beat and hammered the stiff unconscious body with his fists, flung it across the tent and trampled on it. All in vain. He could not break that profound trance. Something pressed upon the canvas walls. He snatched up the witch and stumbled to the door. The things were upon him. He could almost touch them. He thrust out the old woman's body before him, holding it at arm's length. And then——

Four sweet notes trilled out from a bush near by, the voice of the dawn bird. The first breath of a breeze clean and gentle touched his cheek. A shiver like the quivering of a mirage shook the atmosphere. The hyenas vanished. The dead white light went out, the sky darkened. Morning had come, the Powers of Darkness were gone, the old woman's spells were broken.

He threw the body down. It hit the camp-bed and turned over. As it touched the ground the stiff limbs relaxed, the mouth yawned, the eyes opened, the old woman raised her head and scowled up at him.

Charteris sat down, wiped his forehead, and remembered nothing more.

When he came to himself Quashie was sprinkling his face with water while the sergeant fanned him. It was a cool cloudy day; the tent was down and packed, the hammock and its men were waiting; all seemed ready for the march. The old woman was crouching under a tree a little way off, her cloth drawn over her head as usual.

'Master fit for travel?' asked Quashie anxiously.

'Yes,' Charteris said. He got up slowly and shook himself. Quashie seized the bed and packed it in its bag.

'That old woman, Sah! She say she—she—come too!'

The place was peaceful and pretty in the broad daylight, but Charteris saw how uneasy the members of his party were. All were anxious to go. The hammock-men swung the hammock, the Hausas were drawn up in line, their white food-bags dangling over their shoulders. The last carrier lifted the bed-bag on to his head, the sergeant looked towards him and eagerly awaited the word.

Charteris turned to the hammock. As he did so the old woman rose and sidled towards him and grinned. Had he seen something like that sidle and grin before? Did the faint suspicion of a harsh sour smell brush his nostrils, or was it only fancy? Though no one dared put a question as to the happenings of the last hours of the night, he was fully conscious of the uneasiness and curiosity with which everyone was regarding him.

'Oh, Sah!' said Quashie, 'she says she is coming too!'

'No!' said Charteris.

'She says, Sah, that the hunters have gone and she will starve. There is no one to feed her. She will never leave you!'

Now that broad daylight had come, Charteris did not believe in witches, but he would not spend another minute in the old woman's company. He was at a loss, however, how to act—what to do with her; how to prevent her following him.

'Over there,' said Quashie, pointing vaguely away, 'not far, is the big river. On the other side is Togoland, German country.'

'Ah!' said Charteris slowly. 'Ah! Very well. Let the Germans have her! Here! Sergeant Ali Baba, take two men. Convey her to the river and make her cross it. Tell her never to come back this side again. How long will it take?'

'To the river and back is three hours, sir,' said the sergeant.

'Go then! Where we stop for breakfast, there I will await you.'

The sergeant and a couple of Hausas seized the old woman and hurried her out of sight.

'Now, boys,' said Charteris, 'hurry! Get away from this place!'

There was no need to urge on either soldiers or carriers. Charteris was full twelve stone, but the hammock-men rushed him along as though he were a baby. Quashie's path was marked by cooking-pots dropped in his haste, and when a carrier tripped and fell he cried so piteously that Charteris was moved to halt the hammock till he caught up again. They had little more than cleared the Kroom when a carbine-shot rang out. Charteris saw Quashie glance uneasily at him, but neither of them spoke. They ran through the hot hours till nearly midday, by which time they were well into the big forest. The spent hammock-men nearly fell as they passed beneath a big tree. Charteris halted them and got out. To his amazement he saw that the sergeant and his two men, whom he had supposed to be at the river-side, had already arrived and were awaiting him. The sergeant saluted, but made no remark. Neither did Charteris. Nor did he, during the rest of the time in which he remained in the sergeant's company, inquire as to what had happened, or as to the meaning of the carbine-shot, which must have been fired before the witch was well out of sight of Kandor Kroom.

W. H. ADAMS.



## *A NATIONAL BENEFactor—SIR ROBERT HUNTER.*

BY CANON RAWNSLEY.

A GREAT public servant and a great national benefactor passed away when on November 6 last, after a short illness at his Haslemere home, Sir Robert Hunter entered into rest.

Born on October 27, 1844, at Denmark Hill, he was educated at a private school, from which he passed to the London University and, after taking his M.A. degree, became articled to Messrs. Eyre and Lawson, of John Street, Bedford Row.

In 1865 the movement for the Preservation of Open Spaces began by reason of the threatened extinction of the commoners' rights over Wimbledon Common by Lord Spencer. It was at the suggestion of a lawyer, Mr. Philip Lawrence, who with Sir Henry Peek resisted the enclosure, that the Commons Preservation Society was formed in 1865. Mr. Shaw Lefevre, now Lord Eversley, was elected to the chair which he still holds, and Mr. Lawrence became the first honorary solicitor.

Sir Henry Peek in 1866 offered £400 in prizes for the best essays on 'Commons and the means of preserving them for the public.' Robert Hunter entered for the competition and was awarded a prize as writer of one of the six best essays, the judge being Mr. Shaw Lefevre. It was the study for this essay which laid the foundations of his interest in the subject of commons and open spaces for life.

When two years later Mr. Lawrence accepted the post of solicitor to the Office of Works, Mr. Shaw Lefevre appointed Hunter to succeed him as honorary solicitor to the Commons Preservation Society.

In 1882 the office of legal adviser to the Post Office being vacant, Mr. Shaw Lefevre recommended Professor Fawcett, Postmaster-General, to appoint young Hunter to the post. Mr. Fawcett, as a member of the Commons Preservation Committee, had recognised Hunter's ability, but fearing that his personal friendship might bias his choice, referred the applications of all the candidates for the office to Sir Arthur Blackwood without comment, and it was on his strong advice that Hunter was selected.

Few people recognise the monumental work Hunter did for the postal service during the thirty years he held office, because few people realise how great a variety of legal work is required by a

large administrative department like the Post Office. It fell to his lot, not only continually to examine private Bills, but to draft and to supervise all postal regulations and negotiations connected with the compulsory acquisition of land for Post-Office purposes in London and the country. On behalf of the Post Office, he was instrumental in passing through Parliament fifty public general Acts.

The taxpayer is hardly aware what money Hunter saved the country by the passing of the Conveyance of Mails Act in 1893, which was both his suggestion and his drafting. This, and the successful litigation with various railway companies which followed, was said by Sir George Murray, then Secretary to the Post Office, to have saved the country 10,000,000%. Hunter used to speak of this as the most important service he had rendered to the Post Office. Before that Act was passed the remuneration for the carriage of mails was a matter of private arbitration between the Post Office and the Companies. By the Act, as proposed by Hunter, all differences between the Companies and the Post Office were referred to the Railway and Canal Commission. The Post Office Consolidation Act of 1908 (by which twenty-five Post Office Acts were consolidated) entailed years of patient labour, and became law largely through Hunter's tact and management as it passed through committee.

Another case in which great saving to the Department was effected under Robert Hunter's advice was the limitation of railway free messages. It was estimated that the money value of these telegrams, whose number had been increasing yearly by leaps and bounds, would, in twenty-five years, have amounted to more than the whole sum paid to the Companies in the purchase of the telegraphs. It seemed at one time that the only way out of the difficulty was costly litigation. Hunter suggested that a limitation of the number of free messages to be sent should be substituted for a limitation of the kind of message, and this solution of the difficulty was accepted by the Railway Companies.

It is the rule that Public General Acts shall be drafted by the Treasury draftsman, but Hunter had to instruct him as to the requirements of the Post Office with regard to all Bills affecting that Department, and always went through and settled the drafts with him, sometimes drafting the Bill in the first instance for his guidance; and he himself generally drafted all departmental amendments proposed during the passage of a Bill through the House. The splendid self-reliance and independence of judgment which he had learned in early days, as solicitor to

the Commons Preservation Society, never forsook him. Throughout his career he made it a rule to form his own conclusions and to give his own advice instead of relying on opinions obtained from outside, as many solicitors would have done. He believed that the Department profited in saving of time and in homogeneity of advice, and in the better training of his own assistants. His practice was justified, for he never gave the Department any advice which got them into difficulty or was even questioned. We believe that he never advised them to fight a big case which they did not win.

No wonder that Mr. Fawcett was wont to say that 'nothing in his official career had given him greater pleasure than the securing of a man of Hunter's character and abilities for the country's service.'

The development of the telephone service from its earliest infancy took place during Hunter's tenure of office, and gave rise to questions and consequences in which he played a large part. The crowning work of his service to the nation as a Post-Office official was the final purchase contract of the National Telephone Company's system, which was drafted by Hunter and negotiated by him in conjunction with Sir Henry Babington Smith. The Company claimed 20,924,700*l.* from the State: they were awarded 12,515,264*l.* This saving of more than eight million pounds to the taxpayers was largely the result of Sir Robert Hunter's judgment in drafting an agreement, conjointly with his friend the Secretary of the Post Office, which stood the test of prolonged and fiercely fought arbitration.

It is a sorrow to his friends to think that the continued strain of this arbitration may have told upon him seriously. Though apparently a frail man, he had, together with a tough constitution, the ability of long and sustained brain effort, but it is not impossible that the seeds of the illness which eventually carried him off were sown during the time of this anxious work. It is an added sorrow to think that the Treasury did not see fit to remunerate him adequately for his extra labour.

He was a man beloved by all the Post-Office servants who came in contact with him. It did one's heart good to visit the cheery man in his workroom and to feel that, in the midst of tremendous public labour, he could always spare time to discuss any matter that concerned the National Trust, an open-space problem, or a question of right of way; and nothing was more pleasant than to meet him during the luncheon hour, at the restaurant provided for the officials, and to see on what easy terms of friendship he

was with all—from highest to lowest. In the very month in which he died, the staff officials had determined to give a farewell dinner to him to testify their cordial admiration and friendship, and their sense of loss in his departure from St. Martin's. When he was knighted in 1894, congratulations poured in upon him from all parts of the world and from men of all political parties. It was felt that few public servants had better earned the honour paid him.

But it is not only of Sir Robert Hunter the indefatigable servant of the State Department, who by his sagacity and legal acumen saved millions of money to the ratepayers, we would speak, but of Sir Robert Hunter, the strenuous patriot and man of public spirit, who gave his spare time in unpaid services to the saving of commons and open spaces, rights of way, and places of natural and historic beauty for the recreation, the rest, and inspiration of future Britain.

It was a fortunate thing that, thanks to the prize essay, the young lawyer became connected with the Commons Preservation Society. At once he found himself congenially employed in the defence of Hampstead Heath, Berkhamstead, Wimbledon, Wandsworth, and Plumstead Commons, and Tooting Graveney, and he was largely responsible for the successes achieved in these cases. He carried on to a triumphant termination all the suits which had been initiated by the Commons Preservation Society, acting on the advice of Mr. Lawrence, whom he succeeded as secretary; and engaged in many others which were promoted directly or indirectly by the Society. Not the least interesting part of the work, to Hunter's mind, was that he came into touch with the protagonists of public rights—John Stuart Mill, Mr. Fawcett, Lord Mount Temple, Baron Pollock, Sir Fowell Buxton, Lord Fitzmaurice, Sir Charles Dilke, Sir William Harcourt, Dean Stanley, the late Duke of Westminster, the late Lord Farrer, the late Lord Thring, and Miss Octavia Hill. Few of the old guard remain, but Mr. Raper, Mr. James Bryce, Sir Fowell Buxton, Mr. Edward North Buxton, Lord Eversley, and Mr. Briscoe Eyre are still with us to testify to Hunter's cheery optimism and constant courage in face of great odds, and to the soundness of his judgment as he led them to victory.

He was adviser to the Commons Preservation Society for fourteen years, at the time when to fight for an open space and to defend a common or right of way had not behind it, as it has to-day, friendly public opinion and the good-will of Parliament. But

he never lost a case, for though in that of Tollard Farnham the suit was relinquished for insufficiency of funds to appeal against the judgment of the Exchequer Court, a judgment on an exactly similar case, given in the Court of Chancery, was entirely favourable to the Commons Preservation Society.

The work of the Commons Preservation Society, after the Epping Forest victory, was extended to rural commons at the suggestion of Mr. Fawcett, and important suits were fought in the defence of Ashdown Forest, Malvern Chase, and Banstead Common, while the intervention of the Society resulted in the preservation from enclosure of the Forest of Dean, Burnham Beeches, and many other beautiful places.

With regard to the saving of Banstead Common and Banstead Down, as it is called, the suit, though brought after thirteen long years of litigation into the haven of success by Mr. Percival Birkett, who succeeded him as solicitor to the Commons Preservation Society, was initiated by Hunter and was the means of preserving 1,200 acres to the public.

Burnham Beeches would not have been saved but for Hunter's intervention, for the common, which consists of 374 acres, of which about half is planted with magnificent old beeches, was offered for sale in 1879 together with 175 acres of enclosed freehold land. The Corporation of London was willing to buy the common, but had no power to buy the enclosed land. The vendor refused to separate the two, and the option for purchase was only granted for a week. Hunter approached Sir Henry Peek to purchase the whole and to sell the common to the Corporation. Sir Henry Peek stated afterwards in a testimonial for Hunter that, so great was his reliance on Hunter's judgment, that he had purchased the Burnham Beeches without ever having gone down to inspect the property.

In one case, connected with the enclosure of a part of Epping Forest called Lord's Bushes, which had been wrongfully enclosed, a very different decision had to be come to. Hunter advised Mr. Edward North Buxton to pull down a fence at a certain point where an ancient bridleway from Middlesex through the Forest passed to Romford. When it came before a jury at Chelmsford, Hunter insisted upon the withdrawal of a juror and proved himself in the right. The lord of the manor endeavoured to re-close the footpath: it was instantly and publicly re-opened and no further attempt of the kind was made. The practical effect of the action was to save Lord's Bushes.

This brings one naturally to speak of the crowning work that Hunter did for the preservation of open spaces in conducting to a successful issue the fight for the re-opening of Epping Forest. The suit resulted in the saving for all time for public enjoyment, at the very gates of London, of a beautiful woodland with open lands 5,600 acres in extent. Lord Eversley's account of this suit, which had far-reaching consequences for the saving of commons throughout Britain, is as follows :

'More than 3,000 acres of the Forest had been enclosed, and the whole would soon have been lost if nothing had been done. The most serious of the enclosures was that in Loughton, where the lord of the manor had enclosed at one swoop 1,400 acres. The inhabitants of the manor had from very ancient times enjoyed the custom of lopping the trees for firewood during the winter months. The Society, largely by the advice of Mr. Hunter, brought a suit in the name of a labouring man, named Willingale, against the lord of the manor, claiming an injunction to restrain him from cutting down the trees, and alleging the rights of the inhabitants. This suit was never brought to a conclusion owing to the death of Willingale, but, in the course of the investigations, Mr. Hunter made a discovery of the utmost importance, which had the effect ultimately of saving the Forest and abating all the enclosures.

'It had always been thought that the Forest consisted of nineteen distinct manors and that the commoners of each manor had the right of turning out cattle only in the wastes of their several manors. The lords of some of the manors, acting on this belief, had bought out all the commoners in order to enclose under the ancient Statute of Merton.

'Hunter, however, discovered that this was a totally wrong view of the Forest. It was a single great waste : the commoners of every one of the nineteen manors had equal rights of turning out cattle over the whole Forest. It followed that if any commoner could be found with a long enough purse to bring a suit against all the persons who had enclosed, there was every prospect of success. We found that the Corporation of the City of London, as owner of a cemetery at Ilford, within the precincts of the Forest, had rights of common. The Society thereupon went, as a deputation, to the Lord Mayor and Corporation and induced them to take up the cudgels and fight the question in the interests of the public. I also represented to the Lord Mayor that the legal questions involved in the case were so intricate and difficult that any ordinary solicitor would certainly fail, and therefore urged that Hunter should be associated with the City Solicitor in the conduct of the action. My advice was adopted, and although the suit was nominally in the



hands of the City Solicitor, Hunter, as solicitor for our Society, was mainly responsible for its conduct.

‘The suit was of its kind one of the greatest and most important of any initiated. It ended in a complete success, and this success was undoubtedly due to Mr. Hunter’s extraordinary knowledge of the subject and to his persistent exertions over years of investigation.’

What those exertions were we may gather from the fact that the suit was begun in 1871, and that judgment was not given by Sir George Jessel, Master of the Rolls, till July 1874, when Hunter was in his thirtieth year. In his investigation of the case he examined all the documents connected with the Forest and its manors from the earliest times, and examined and often re-examined all the witnesses, over seventy in number, who were called at the trial.

The result of the Epping Forest proceeding was that four hundred enclosures were declared to be illegal, 3,000 acres which had been cribbed from it were restored to the Forest, and finally 6,000 acres were secured to the public for ever. Never was there preserved by a single suit an area so large in extent and so remarkable for woodland charm and scenic beauty as that secured for ever for the enjoyment of the public by the battle of Epping Forest. The legal arguments lasted for three years, and Hunter, the youngest solicitor who had ever fought so big an action, was deservedly praised by Sir George Jessel.

In all complex questions of commons and enclosures, Hunter gave his services unreservedly to the cause. As he had championed the efforts of his friend, Mr. Edward North Buxton, at Hainault and Lord’s Bushes, so he came to the help of Mr. Briscoe Eyre in preventing Lord Ilchester’s scheme for regulating the wastes of Plaitford Manor, and the general movement for enclosing wastes round the two Bramshaws. These schemes of enclosure on the outskirts of the New Forest, persistently pursued during two hundred years, were brought to an end in the great case of *Eyre v. Stanley* by the sagacity of Hunter, who won his case by digging up a decision of the Lord Chancellor to Queen Elizabeth. The Act of 1876, for the New Forest, was his work, though he did not receive full credit for it.

Notwithstanding his removal to the Post Office in 1882, Sir Robert Hunter, as Vice-Chairman of the Commons Preservation Society and as Chairman of the Kent and Surrey Footpaths Committees, kept himself in touch with the work of the Commons Preservation Society till the day of his death. For forty-five years, though not for the last thirty officially engaged by the Society, he gave the benefit of his unrivalled knowledge of the subject



to those who were engaged in the battle. His interest in footpath law never slackened, as is evidenced by the fact that, after the last meeting of the National Trust which he attended, he went straight away, fatigued as he was by a full day's labour, to take the chair at a meeting of the Hampstead Northern Heights Footpaths Society.

It was well said of him by Henry Fawcett, on one occasion, that he had never known a professional man do so much professional work for nothing; for no one who had a real cause for grievance against footpath-stopping or the enclosure of waste or commons ever consulted Hunter without getting the full benefit of his advice, and being put in the way of obtaining assistance in the right quarters.

The amount of work he got through is astonishing when it is remembered that he only missed attendance at the Post Office for two days in thirty years (except in one year, and that through serious illness), and that all the extra work involved by his enthusiasm for the open-space movement was done after office hours and in his short holidays.

In 1895 more work came to him to do that perhaps was nearer his heart than any he had yet undertaken for the public benefit. Circumstances had made the writer feel that it was imperative that some association should be formed for the securing and the permanent holding of places of historic interest and natural beauty. The first person consulted was Robert Hunter. He threw himself into the scheme at once, but begged that Miss Octavia Hill might be consulted. When consulted, not ten minutes elapsed before she said, 'If Sir Robert Hunter will help us and the Duke of Westminster will allow us to meet in Grosvenor House, the scheme will go forward.' That it has gone forward is evidenced by the fact that, in addition to the public monuments held in trust, forty-five properties in eighteen years have been secured for the nation's enjoyment, and Sir Robert Hunter, in addition to the 6,000 acres which he gained for the public when he won the famous Epping Forest case, has helped to secure another 6,000 as recreation grounds for the people. In his own countryside in Surrey, Hindhead Common and the Devil's Punchbowl—750 acres in extent—Ludshott Common, Bramshott Chase, Nutcombe Down, Grayswood Common, Waggoner's Wells, and Marley Common remain as monuments to Sir Robert Hunter's enthusiasm and to the trust which was placed in him by the donors as adviser and arranger of details in negotiation.

Here in parenthesis we may add that he helped Miss Octavia Hill in the early days of the Kyrle Society formed by her sister. They

were fast friends, for they had in common the high ideal of service and the grace of public spirit, which naturally attracted the one to the other. They had the same passionate love of natural beauty and believed in its power to help the workers of the world. It is touching to recall that almost the last words Sir Robert Hunter was heard to utter showed that he thought of the great Societies for which he had worked, and feared they might feel the loss of his help. Nor can I help recalling how, as I accompanied him to Hampstead after the last meeting of the National Trust at which he was present, he spoke with great satisfaction of the Box Hill negotiations being so nearly completed, and of the National Trust having obtained the full confidence of the public. He never realised that this was largely due to himself, for he was as humble in heart as he was public-spirited.

It is not only the Commons Preservation Society and the National Trust that will miss him : he will be sadly missed by the Hampstead Garden Suburb, of which he was Chairman and a co-operator with Mrs. Barnett from its beginning ; but his presence will haunt Parliament Hill, Richmond Hill, Vauxhall Park, Hilly Fields, Lincoln's Inn Fields, for the preservation of which, as open spaces, he worked ; and Londoners who care for the old historic buildings—Charterhouse, Staple Inn, the French Almshouses in Mile End Road, and the Ironmonger Almshouse in the Kingsland Road—will bless Sir Robert's memory.]

He has gone from us just at a time when he was looking forward to giving all his well-earned leisure to the work of his heart. Notwithstanding his laborious life he had preserved all the freshness of youth, for, added to a sense of humour, he had almost a child's power of simple enjoyment. His cheery optimism never forsook him, and in the midst of most anxious legal work he never allowed himself to be worried by it.

Correspondence from his intimate friends is curiously unanimous in the appreciation by the writers of his special characteristics. They speak of his simplicity and single-mindedness, of his gentle goodness, sympathy, and self-forgetfulness, of his disinterested public spirit, of his largeness of view and his practical and sound judgment, of his rapid concentration in work and his apparent absence of anxiety or effort, of his fierce fighting spirit whenever public rights were in danger, of his persistence in a cause he believed in and of his undaunted courage in the face of odds, of his legal acumen and of his ingenuity in meeting all the difficulties of each case as they arose. A great lawyer and in spirit a great advocate,

both in preparing and conducting a case, his friends all agree that he showed the utmost consideration for all concerned, including his opponents. He was not an eloquent man, but all his speeches were carefully arranged and to the point. He spoke incisively and carried conviction by his great earnestness. Those who heard him speak on the occasion of the opening of Adelaide Hill must have been astonished by the grasp he had of all the historic and literary associations of the place. Sir Robert left nothing to chance : he always came prepared. His was the pen of a ready writer, and few important occasions passed to celebrate the obtaining of some open space, and few important legal decisions connected with the law of commons, that did not receive, in the columns of the *Times*, some notice from his hand.

He never forgot a good story, and I remember how he chuckled when the Speaker, in declaring Gowbarrow Park and Fell open to the public, said, ' You have all heard, my friends, of a certain mountain that endured the pains of labour and brought forth a mouse. But here,' he continued, pointing to Gowbarrow Fell, ' the mice have been in labour and have brought forth a mountain.'

He dwelt for thirty years at Haslemere. Though a sturdy Liberal from first to last, his official position prevented him taking part in politics, but from time to time he addressed meetings on Free Trade, on Education, and Temperance legislation. Strongly Liberal in opinion, he was strongly Conservative where scenery was concerned. He defended Black Down against the road makers and refreshment-room builders, and fought hard to prevent what he considered the over-drastring thinning out of trees on Grayswood Common.

He was perfectly fearless, even in dealing with friends, when he thought their action was likely to interfere with the beauty of natural scenery, and the Haslemere people will not soon forget the speech he made in protest against the enlargement of the Parish Church at Haslemere, on the ground that to alter it would destroy its character and its harmony with the quiet village surroundings. He loved that Parish Church dearly and was a devout and constant worshipper there. His body rests beneath its shadow, but his soul will live and move among the people, and be a constant source of inspiration to public spirit and unselfish zeal. He will be long remembered in a wider world as a high-minded servant of the State, a lover of the people, and a great-hearted Christian gentleman.

# THAT OTHER ONE.<sup>1</sup>

[BY ARTHUR C. BENSON.

I AM going to try, in these few pages, to draw water out of a deep well—the well of which William Morris wrote as the *Well at the World's End*. I shall try to describe a very strange and secret experience, which visits me rarely and at unequal intervals; sometimes for weeks together not at all; sometimes several times in a day. When it happens it is not strange at all, nor wonderful; the only wonder about it is that it does not happen more often, because it seems at the moment to be the one true thing in a world of vain shadows; everything else falls away, becomes accidental and remote, like the lights, let me say, of some unknown town, which one sees as one travels by night, and as one twitches aside the curtain from the window of a railway-carriage, in a sudden interval between two profound slumbers. The train has relaxed its speed; one looks out; the red and green signal lamps hang high in the air; and one glides past a sleeping town, the lamps burning quietly in deserted streets; there are house-fronts below, in a long thoroughfare suddenly visible from end to end; above, there are indeterminate shadows, the glimmering faces of high towers; it is all ghost-like and mysterious; one only knows that men live and work there; and then the tides of slumber flow in again, and one dives thirstily to the depths of sleep.

Before I say more about it, I will just relate my last taste of the mood. I was walking alone, in the autumn landscape; bare fields about me; the trees of a village to my right, touched sharply with gold and russet-red; some white-gabled cottages clustered together, and there was a tower among the trees; it was near sunset, and the sun seemed dragging behind him to the west long wisps of purple and rusty clouds touched with fire; below me to the left, a stream passing slowly among rushes and willow-beds, all beautiful and silent and remote. I had an anxious matter in my mind, a thing that required, so it seemed to me, careful deliberation, to steer a right course among many motives and contingencies. I had gone out alone to think it over. I weighed this against that, and it seemed to me that I was headed off by some obstacle whichever way I turned. Whatever I desired to do appeared to be disadvantageous and even hurtful. 'Yes,' I said to myself, 'this is one of those cases where, whatever I do, I shall wish I had done differently! I see no way out.' It was then that a far deeper

<sup>1</sup> Copyright, 1914, by A. C. Benson, in the United States of America.

voice seemed to speak in me, the voice of something strong and quiet and even indolent, which seemed half-amused, half-vexed, by my perturbation. It said, 'When you have done reasoning, and pondering, I will decide.' Then I thought that a sort of vague, half-spoken, half-dumb dialogue followed.

'What are you?' I said. 'What right have you to interfere?'

The other voice did not trouble to answer; it only seemed to laugh, a lazy laugh.

'I am trying to think this all out,' I said, half-ashamed, half-vexed. 'You may help me, if you will; I am perplexed—I see no way out of this!'

'Oh, you may think as much as you like,' said the other voice. 'I am in no hurry; I can wait.'

'But I *am* in a hurry,' I said, 'and I cannot wait. This has got to be settled somehow, and without delay.'

'I shall decide, when the time comes,' said the voice to me.

'Yes, but you do not understand,' I said, feeling partly irritated and partly helpless. 'There is this and that, there is so-and-so to be considered, there is the effect on these other persons to be weighed; there is my own position too—I must think of my health—there are a dozen things to be taken into account.'

'I know,' said the voice. 'I do not mind your balancing all these things, if you wish. I shall take no heed of that! I repeat that when you have finished thinking it out, I shall decide.'

'Then you know what you mean to do?' said I, a little angered.

'No, I do not know just yet,' said the voice, 'but I shall know when the time comes; there will be no doubt at all.'

'Then I suppose I shall have to do what you decide?' I said, angry but impressed.

'Yes, you will do what I decide,' said the voice. 'You know that perfectly well.'

'Then what is the use of my taking all this trouble?' I said.

'Oh, you may just as well look into it,' said the voice, 'That is your part. You are only my servant, after all. You have got to work the figures and the details out, and then I shall settle. Of course you must do your part—it is not all wasted. What is wasted is your fretting and fussing!'

'I am anxious,' I said. 'I cannot help being anxious!'

'That is a pity!' said the voice. 'It hurts you and it hurts me too, in a way. You disturb me, you know; but I cannot interfere with you. I must wait.'

'But are you sure you will do right?' I said.

'I shall do what must be done,' said the voice. 'If you mean, shall I regret my choice, that is possible; at least you may regret it. But it will not have been a mistake.'

I was puzzled at this; and for a time the voice was silent, so that I had leisure to look about me. I had walked some way while the dialogue went on, and I was now by the stream, which ran full and cold into a pool beside the bridge, a pool like a clouded jewel. How beautiful it was! . . . The old thoughts began again, the old perplexities. 'If he says *that*,' I said to myself, thinking of an opponent of my plan, 'then I must be prepared with an answer—it is a weak point in my case; perhaps it would be better to write; one says what one thinks; not what one means to say. . .'

'Still at work?' said the voice. 'You are having a very uncomfortable time up there. I am sorry for that! Yet I cannot think why you do not understand!'

'What *are* you?' I said impatiently.

There was no answer to that.

'You seem very strong and patient!' I said at last. 'I think I rather like you, and I am sure that I trust you; but you irritate me, and you will not explain. Cannot you help me a little? You seem to me to be out of sight—the other side of a wall. Cannot you break it down, or look over?'

'You would not like that,' said the voice; 'it would be inconvenient, even painful; it would upset your plans very much. Tell me—you like life, do you not?'

'Yes,' I said, 'I like life—at least I am very much interested in it. I do not feel sure if I like it; I think you know that better than I do. Tell me—do I like it?'

'Yes,' said the voice; 'at least I do. You have guessed right for once; it matters more what I like than what you like. You see, I believe in God, for one thing.'

'So do I,' I said eagerly; 'I have reached that point! I am sure He is there. It is largely a question of argument, and I have really no doubt—no doubt at all. There are difficulties of course—difficulties about personality and intention; and then there is the origin of evil—I have thought much about that, and I have arrived at a solution; it is this. I can explain it best by an analogy. . .'

There came a laugh from the other side of the wall—not a scornful laugh or an idle laugh, but a laugh kind and compassionate, like a father with a child on his knee; and the voice said, 'I have seen Him—I see Him! He is here all about us, and He is yonder. He is not coming to meet us, as you think. . . . Dear me, how young you must be! . . . I had forgotten.'

This struck me dumb for an instant ; then I said, ' You frighten me ! Who are you, what are you . . . *where* are you ? '

And then the voice said, in a tone of the deepest and sweetest love, as if surprised and a little pained, ' My child ! '

And then I heard it no more ; and I went back to my cares and anxieties. But it was as the voice had said, and when the time came to decide, I had no doubt at all what to do.

Now I have told all this in the nearest and simplest words that I can find. I have had to use similitudes of voices and laughter and partition-walls, because one can only use the language which one knows. But it is all quite true and real, more real than a hundred talks which one holds with men and women whose faces and dress one sees in rooms and streets, and with whom one bandies words about things for which one does not care. There was indeed some one present with me, whom I knew perfectly well, though I could not discern him, whom I had known all my life, who had gone about with me and shared all my experiences, in so far as he chose. But before I go on to speak further I will tell one more experience, which came at a time when I was very unhappy, longing to escape from life, looking forward mournfully to death.

It had been under similar circumstances—a dreadful argument proceeding in my mind as to what I could do to get back to happiness again, whom to consult, where to go, whether to give up my work, whether to add to it, what diet to use, how to get sleep which would not visit me.

' Can't you help me ? ' I said over and over again to the other person. At last the answer came, very faint and far away.

' I am sick,' said the voice, ' and I cannot come forth ! '

That frightened me exceedingly, because I felt alone and weak. So I said, ' Is it my fault ? Is it anything that I have done ? '

' I have had a blow,' said the other voice. ' You dealt it me—but it is not your fault—you did not know.'

' What can I do ? ' I said.

' Ah, nothing ! ' said the voice. ' You must not disturb me ! I am trying to recover, and I shall recover. Go on with your play if you can, and do not heed me.'

' My play ! ' I said scornfully. ' Do you not know I am miserable ? '

The voice gave a sigh. ' You hurt me,' it said. ' I am weak and faint ; but you can help me ; be as brave as you can. Try not to think or grieve. I shall be able to help you again soon, but not now . . . Ah, leave me to myself,' it added ; ' I must sleep, a long sleep ; it is your turn to help ! '



And then I heard no more—till a day long after, when the voice came to me on a bright morning by the sea, with the clear waves breaking and hissing on the shingle; the voice came blithe and strong, and said, 'I am well again; you have done your part, dear one! Give me your burden, and I will carry it; it is your time of joy!'

And then for a long time after that I did not hear the voice, and I was full of delight, hour by hour, only grudging the time I must spend in sleep, because it kept me from the life I loved.

These then are some of the talks we have held together, that Other One and I. But I must say this—that he will not always come for being called. I sometimes call to him and get no answer; sometimes he cries out beside me suddenly in the air. He seems to have a life of his own, quite distinct from mine. Sometimes, when I am fretted and vexed, he is quietly joyful and elate, and then my troubles die away, like the footsteps of the wind upon water; and sometimes, when I would be happy and contented, he is heavy and displeased, and takes no heed of me; and then I too fall into sorrow and gloom. He is much the stronger, and it matters far more to me what he feels than what I feel. I do not know how he is occupied—very little, I think; and what is strangest of all, he changes somewhat; very slowly and imperceptibly; but he has changed more than I have in the course of my life. I do not change at all, I think. I can say better what I think, I am more accomplished and skilful; but the thought and motive is unaltered from what it was when I was a child. But he is different in some ways. I have only gone on perceiving and remembering, and sometimes forgetting. But he does not forget; and here I feel that I have helped him a little, as a servant can help his master to remember the little things he has to do.

I think that many people must have similar experiences to this. Tennyson had, when he wrote 'The Two Voices,' and I have seen hints of the same thing in a dozen books. The strange thing is that it does not help one more to be strong and brave; because I know this, if I know anything, that when the anxious and careful part of me lies down at last to rest, I shall slip past the wall which now divides us, and be clasped close in the arms of that Other One; nay, it will be more than that! I shall be merged with him, as the quivering waterdrop is merged with the fountain. That will be a blessed peace; and I shall know, I think, without any questioning or wondering, many things that are obscure to me now, under these low-hung skies, which after all I love so well . . .

## SIXTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS.

NEARING JORDAN.

BY SIR HENRY LUCY.

NOTE.—The Editor cannot resist quoting a Christmas Eve letter to Sir Henry Lucy from a constant reader :

*' Dear Sir,—On many and many nights have I blessed you during the past nine years. My wife, owing to partial paralysis, has been bed-ridden, and when disturbed at 3, 4 or 5 then the old Cornhills have come like manna to the Israelites of old.*

*' For your " Sixty Years in the Wilderness " have proved a solace in the interval before sleep was won.*

*' This morning I light on your last, and it supplies a fitting phrase for my long-continued work of fifty years . . . '*

## CHAPTER IV.

## SOME CHURCH MEMORIES AND AN IDYLL.

IN the first volume of this series of reminiscences I mentioned the immense advantage derived in early boyhood from reading Smiles' ' Self-help.' An earlier influence in moulding character at that impressionable age was the work of the Rev. John Macnaught, Vicar of St. Chrysostom's Church, Everton. He was a remarkable man, for record of whose life one looks in vain in that comprehensive work, the ' Dictionary of National Biography.' Son of a popular doctor in Liverpool, he commenced his career as curate-in-charge of a sort of chapel-of-ease connected with Everton Church. In a short time the limits of what was originally a schoolroom proved too narrow for the congregation drawn by the sermons of the young, at the time obscure, curate. At the end of his first year of incumbency a movement was set on foot to build a church for him somewhere in the neighbourhood. As the congregation was necessarily small and unembarrassed by the company of the rich, the enterprise seemed hopeless. It was, nevertheless, entered upon and triumphantly carried through. St. Chrysostom's Church stands to this day a handsome and commodious structure.

My Father was one of the earliest pew-renters. Among the

congregation there was no more constant attendant at morning and evening service than a small boy then in his twelfth year. Macnaught's sermons, delivered extemporaneously, opened out a new world to my young eyes. I am afraid the interest created was rather intellectual than devotional. The preacher, though duly trammelled by a text, made occasional excursions into the region of history, of books, of science, of astronomy, of geology, even of great events happening throughout the world—talk which many good people thought should be confined to weekdays. I have vivid recollection of a sermon in which, by way of illustration of his theme, he minutely described the growth of a rose from the state of earliest bud to the beauty of fullest bloom. I found this much more interesting than reflections upon Transubstantiation, or observations upon Original Sin.

As the little schoolroom in Mill Lane filled under the fascination of the young preacher, so in due time the spacious aisles of St. Chrysostom's Church were thronged. Circumstances happening a few years after the church was opened extended the fame of the preacher beyond the borough boundary. Naturally a broad-minded man, lacking in sympathy with the narrowness of creeds, the course of his study and reflection led him to question the accepted doctrine of the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. He set forth his views in a little volume of which I possess a rare copy given me by the author many years after this turning path in his career had been courageously traversed. The book created a profound sensation in all the churches and religious seminaries throughout the country. The *furor* was exceeded only by the earlier publication of the more famous 'Essays and Reviews.'

Strong pressure was put upon the Bishop of Chester to inhibit the Vicar of St. Chrysostom's from performing church duties. He stopped short of that, but after brief interval the bolt fell obliquely. Macnaught invited the Rev. H. B. Wilson, one of the contributors to 'Essays and Reviews,' to preach in his church. The invitation was cordially accepted. Public announcement of the engagement was made. On the morning appointed St. Chrysostom's was thronged. Macnaught as usual read the Service. At its close, instead of making way for the visitor, he ascended the pulpit. Explanation was forthcoming in startling fashion. He read a communication from the Bishop of Chester inhibiting Mr. Wilson from preaching. Having slowly read the formal document, he paused for a moment, looked round the hushed congregation,

and with gesture unconsciously reminiscent of Burke with his dagger in the House of Commons, flung the paper to the ground.

'And now,' he quietly said, 'I will read Mr. Wilson's sermon.' Which he forthwith did.

After facing the storm for what seemed a lengthened period, Macnaught took a step which had the effect of instantly stilling it. Of his own free will he retired from the church that in especial degree was his own, forfeiting an assured income the reward of splendid labour. Still young, married, the care of a family imposed upon him, he went out into the world, in some narrow sense a proscribed man, to begin his life again. Some years later, he, perhaps unconsciously following the example of the Rev. Charles Honeyman, purchased the lease of a proprietary chapel in Conduit Street, London. Avoiding sharp controversial topics, he was not less successful in filling the place with admiring pew-renters than was the divine esteemed in the Newcome family circle.

To-day I am privileged to renew one of the oldest of my friendships in the charming company of Mr. Macnaught's daughter, the wife of Sir Thomas Sutherland, Chairman of the P. & O. Co.

In addition to this early habit of church-going, I was a diligent attendant on the Sunday-school. In this pursuit I achieved what is probably a record, since I was expelled by two teachers in succession. The first was a teller in one of the Liverpool banks, named Mewburn, who took an active part in raising the fund necessary for the building of St. Chrysostom's Church and upon its completion acted as churchwarden. His class met in the schoolroom in Mill Lane. One Sunday morning, arriving with constitutional desire to obtain the greatest possible good out of anything accessible, Mr. Mewburn invited me to step with him into the vestry. To my surprise he politely but firmly directed me to discontinue my attendance. I had not the slightest idea why this sentence was passed upon me. There being no appeal I was obliged to obey, and went forth in fuller sympathy with the feelings of Hagar at a critical epoch in her history than had hitherto possessed me.

Years afterwards, acquaintance being renewed on other lines, Mewburn was dining with me in London. Still piqued with curiosity about the genesis of this little episode of my boyhood, I asked him to tell me why I was expelled. I ventured to plead that on the whole my conduct had been exemplary.

'So it was,' he replied. 'And that made the more painful

the step I felt bound to take. The fact is that in the course of the lessons you used from time to time to pose me with questions I was not able to answer straight off. The consequence was, I found, or perhaps only felt, that my authority with the other boys was suffering, and that the only thing to be done was to get you out of the way.'

It may by kind critics perhaps be accepted as proof of catholicity of view that the doors of a Church of England Sunday-school being thus banged, bolted, and barred against me, I meekly knocked at the portals of one conducted in connexion with a neighbouring Congregational Church. It happened by chance that in the girls' department of the school there was one in regular attendance who had been an old sweetheart. We had parted in a tiff. Perhaps accidental *rencontre* might lead to reconciliation. That is neither here nor there. I was welcomed to the senior class of the Islington school and remained in attendance for some months.

Disaster dogged my footsteps. In the day-school where I gained all my education there was a general custom, constant as the coming of noon, that one of the elder boys should go round the forms, seat himself beside a youngster, and remark that 'So-and-so,' indicating another boy of whom the younger had but the slightest, if any, knowledge, 'says you are afraid to fight him.' If the impeachment were admitted the lad was put down as a sneaking coward, and the big boy went farther afield in his mission. If the challenge were accepted, the fight came off in the playground as soon as school was dismissed for the dinner-hour.

I made a practice of accepting the challenge whencesoever it was alleged to have come, and as the adversary was invariably much bigger than I—only of late had I emerged from the trappings of lace-frilled pantalettes, white socks and shoes—I suffered much banging when I ought to have been dining. I fancy, though I do not precisely remember, that some such custom obtained in the Sunday-school to which I later repaired. However it be, one day after the morning class I found myself engaged in single combat. The other fellow was, as usual, much bigger and burlier than I. But practice makes perfect. I came off victor, my adversary going home with a black eye that was the immediate cause of what followed. His parents having extracted particulars of the encounter reported them to the Superintendent of the school, who deputed three Elders to wait upon my parents, inform them of my depravity, and ask them to keep me at home on Sunday mornings.

Their arrival found my mother at home. Circumstances were not auspicious. It happened that a week earlier she had, in the gathering gloom of a February afternoon, received a visit from a smartly dressed, provokingly veiled, young girl who demanded an interview on a matter of serious importance. In the course of it she informed my mother that I having sedulously gained her affections had basely trifled with them. In short I had attached myself to Another, leaving the afternoon caller forlorn. My mother, one of the most lovable and unselfish of women, her daily domestic lot ever brightened by flashes of humour, bridled up at this attack upon her favourite son. The conversation growing heated was broken by the veiled visitor screaming loudly, throwing up her arms, flinging them round my mother and covering her face with kisses.

Well, *I* was the afternoon caller. My sisters had craftily attired me in a suitable selection of their clothes, and, assuming a mincing voice and an attitude of woe proper to a forsaken maiden, I had deceived my own Mother.

No one enjoyed this joke more than she. Naturally it placed her on her guard. When the three Elders representing Sunday-school authority presented themselves, she instantly suspected that this was another of my little games. Possibly I kept in my pay relays of Congregational Church Elders ready to go on misleading missions to confiding mothers. She would have nothing to say to them, and they shaking off from their feet the dust of the hall mat departed, shrewdly suspecting they knew whence I had inherited my evil propensities. I did not go back to the Sunday-school, and, disheartened at this recurrence of undeserved ill-fortune, did not try a third.

Hearing by chance a favourite hymn in vogue half a century ago at St. Chrysostom's Church, there came back to me these memories of my first spiritual Pastor and of Sunday-school discipline. There is one other, perhaps too trivial to be mentioned in this solemn connexion. The pew before ours was regularly occupied by a family which included a prim and pretty damsel, my junior I fancy by about a year. When the Litany was reached she had a habit of turning round and kneeling at the seat. I found it more convenient to lean forward over the book-rail which ran along the front of the pew. The concatenation of circumstance was undesigned. Its result inevitable. When I looked over the pew-rail there was the pretty-faced devotee murmuring the responses :

'Spare us, good Lord.' 'Good Lord, deliver us.' Presently she looked up and we shyly regarded each other. As the Sabbaths passed and resembled one another, inasmuch as they provided this delightful opportunity, the shy look was exchanged for a friendly smile.

I do not know how long this voiceless idyll lasted. I never spoke to the object of my adoration, for I never met her outside the church door. I did not know her name nor she mine. Perhaps if by chance these lines should meet her eye, she may, when hearing the Litany said or sung in another church, think of the days when we were indeed very young.

## CHAPTER V.

### AT THE VICEREGAL LODGE.

IN 1893 my wife and I revisited Ireland, this time at the invitation of Lord Houghton, recently appointed Lord Lieutenant. It was a period of fresh crisis in the Home Rule movement, which had in the meanwhile advanced by long strides. Mr. Gladstone had been returned to power for his fourth, as events proved his last, Administration. His majority in the House of Commons was only forty. Its smallness was sorely disappointing, but it did not affect the determination of the old warrior to take the field again under the Home Rule flag. Nor did it damp the energy with which he conducted a campaign (with the House of Lords as yet untrammelled) predestined to defeat. He was particularly happy in his choice of Lord Lieutenant, Lord Houghton concealing behind an almost nervously modest demeanour the qualities essential to success.

Among minor considerations that have hitherto separated the two Nations is the inconvenience of the time-arrangement by which passengers from London by the fast train reach Dublin. Arriving at Holyhead somewhere in the dead of the night, they are turned out of their snug sleeping-berths and called upon to face an invariably troubled voyage across the Channel. They arrive in Dublin at a time when decent people are still in their beds. Driving from the station to the Viceregal Lodge there is the Liffey to skirt and cross. The smell of it polluting what should be the sweet morning air is indescribable.

We arrived at the Lodge too late to complete a so-called night's rest by going to bed, too early for breakfast. When I



ventured downstairs I found seated at the breakfast-table, sole occupant of the room, an exceedingly mild-mannered gentleman. There was no one to introduce us, and I had not the slightest idea of his identity, nor I fancy he of mine. In these awkward circumstances we had to make conversation throughout the meal. In due time I learnt that my fellow-guest was Thomas Hardy. Here began a friendship cherished through subsequent years, though opportunity of enjoying it has been limited by the novelist's habitual residence in his much-loved Dorset.

Lord Houghton up to his induction to the Viceregal Lodge was unfamiliar with official State duties. But he took to the position of representative of his Sovereign with an alacrity and completeness that left nothing to be desired. Throughout the day, whether at home or abroad, he inflexibly preserved the attitude and manner imposed by his high estate. No one was more impressed by them than his Aide-de-camp. It was the established custom for guests to assemble in the drawing-room punctually at the hour fixed for dinner. Presently the Aide-de-camp disappeared, promptly returned, and, standing at the open doorway, in awed voice announced 'His Excellency!' Whereupon the guests with one accord rose to their feet. The idea subtly conveyed was that, strolling out by the door, Mr. Guise had unexpectedly come upon the Lord Lieutenant advancing towards the drawing-room. Stricken by his majestic personality, fearful if it blazed unannounced upon the company they would faint, he with great presence of mind pulled himself together and at full speed returned just in time to avoid catastrophe.

To do this once in a life-time was a memorable achievement. Mr. Guise not only did it every night with the same appearance of unbounded surprise at the recurrence of the phenomenon. He nightly managed to import into this announcement a new tremor of voice that added appreciably to the sensation created.

Whilst throughout the day and till the withdrawal of outside visitors at the dinner-table Lord Houghton preserved the manner proper to the representative of sovereignty, he, during our stay, nightly put off the Lord Lieutenant and became again for awhile, to his evident pleasure and our delight, a poet and a man of letters. After the ladies had retired for the night, our host—now transformed by substitution of a smoking-jacket for his uniform or dinner dress—Thomas Hardy, and myself forgathered in the smoking-room, where I listened to conversation chiefly on literary topics—anything outside the field of politics.

For the new Viceroy the task of the hour was one of supreme difficulty. Heretofore, save during the brief term of Lord Aberdeen's first administration, the position of the Viceroy had been clearly defined. He had been the headpiece, the outward and visible sign of that British ascendancy which galled the Irish and gratified Ulster and other sections of 'the garrison.' Ireland was at that period sharply divided into two camps, the English and the anti-English.

Lord Houghton came upon the scene with the dawn of a new era. It is understood that the Lord Lieutenant has no politics, being simply the representative of the Sovereign. But Lords Lieutenant come and go with Ministries, and, however cleverly they may hide the colour, are steeped in the hue of party politics. Lord Houghton was the representative of the Queen in Ireland. He was also the nominee of a Government straining every nerve to give Ireland Home Rule. No one talked politics in the drawing-room or dining-room at Dublin Castle, or amid the pleasant environment of the Viceregal Lodge. But facts are stubborn things. Whilst the populace of Dublin recognised in Lord Houghton the standard-bearer of Home Rule, the Ulster party—that is to say, all that is rich and powerful, professional, and official—regarded him as a traitor to the Union.

Dublin is a military centre, and militarism is invariably a hotbed of Toryism. There were wild stories about Lord Wolseley's convictions attributing to him nothing less than intention to mutiny in case of conflict arising upon the passing of the Home Rule Bill. These were gross exaggerations. But in private conversation Lord Wolseley had a frank soldierly fashion of talking about politics—almost the only science he did not understand—which left no doubt on the mind of the listener as to where his sympathies lay on the question of Home Rule.

Writing to me from the Athenæum Club shortly after our return from Ireland, he thus defined his position *vis-à-vis* politics :

'I feel highly flattered by what the *Daily News* says of me and mine in Dublin. I used, like all men of my liberal views, to read that clean paper, but as I never was a politician I cared nothing for party matters. It was Mr. Gladstone's heptarchical policy which drove my friends and myself into the other camp to find salvation in *The Times*.'

'Heptarchical policy' is good and, I think, new.

At the luncheon given at the Viceregal Lodge on the Queen's birthday I chanced to sit near a distinguished officer who almost apologised to me for his presence. He said he had been invited by Lord Houghton both to the luncheon and the State banquet in the evening. Cherishing, as everyone does, a strong personal admiration for Lord Houghton, he felt he would be a traitor to the Empire if he paltered with the evil thing (Home Rule) even to the extent of sitting at meat the guest of Mr. Gladstone's Lord Lieutenant. After long wrestling with his conscience he arrived at a compromise. Out of personal deference to Lord Houghton he would go to the luncheon. From concern for his country he would abstain from the banquet.

Later in the day I met him at tea at the Chief Secretary's Lodge, his arm in a sling.

'Ah,' he said, 'you see one cannot bow the knee in the temple of Rimmon with impunity. When I was riding to town after luncheon at the Viceregal Lodge my horse came a cropper on the cobble-stones and I have sprained my wrist.'

I tried to convince him that this was rather a judgment for his having declined to go to the State banquet instead of to the luncheon. But he was inexorable.

In a letter written to me from the Viceregal Lodge towards the close of his first year's tenancy, Lord Houghton describes the situation in a spirit which accounts for his success in grappling with it.

'Under present conditions,' he says, 'the course of the Lord Lieutenant is not easy to steer. Any encouragement such as yours is particularly welcome, considering I find that everything that matters goes pretty smoothly. But the incredible extent to which political and sectarian differences invade the most private and unprovocative occasions obliges one to be continually careful. At the same time a sense of humour prevents one from feeling any annoyance at these queer explosions of party or religious jealousy.'

With Mr. Gladstone re-instated in power, devoting the last years of his life to a final effort to give Ireland Home Rule, with a Liberal Viceroy installed at Dublin Castle, it might have been thought that Ireland in general, Dublin in particular, would have modified its attitude of implacable hostility to British rule. The anticipated change was not appreciable to the observer. Whilst the Lord Lieutenant was studiously boycotted by the landlord and Ulster parties, the balance was not struck by outward testimony to his

popularity proffered by Home Rulers. The Nationalist Leaders, including members of the House of Commons, ignored invitations to social parties at the Viceregal Lodge. An event of the Dublin season is the appearance of the Lord Lieutenant and his suite driven in semi-state to Punchestown Races. Lord Houghton, as might be expected of him, lived up to the occasion, his turn-out, notably the horses that drew his carriages, beating the record. Here was an opportunity for popular demonstration that might have done something to recompense Mr. Gladstone's labours at Westminster and encourage the Lord Lieutenant in his self-denying task of conciliation. A great throng, presumably Nationalist in its composition, watched the arrival of the Viceregal party. Not a hat was uplifted or a cheer raised.

Even more striking testimony to the ineradicable force of Irish hatred of anything British was forthcoming in connexion with the terrible fate that befel Lord Frederick Cavendish on the very day he arrived in Ireland, bearer of the olive-branch. Immediately opposite our bedroom window, on the other side of a lawn leading from the Viceregal Lodge to the public road in Phoenix Park, was the place where the assassins had fallen upon the unsuspecting Chief Secretary and his colleague Mr. Burke. From the room below Lord Spencer, looking out, saw the scuffle, and thought it was horseplay on the part of youths out on their Saturday half-holiday. I walked down to the spot expecting to find some memorial recording the event. There was nothing, unless fancy recognised one in a blasted tree by the roadside. It was under this that Lord Frederick and Mr. Burke fell, done to death by the knives of the assassins. The withering of this particular tree may, probably was, due to prosaic conditions of which I found no record. The fact remains that after the murder the tree began to wither, and at the time of my visit was in the condition described.

Close by a small cross, unobtrusively cut in the roadway, marked the fatal spot. Inquiring why this should be, I was told that, the erection of a suitable memorial being suggested shortly after the murder, the authorities were privily informed that it would forthwith be destroyed and that any attempt to rebuild it would be similarly frustrated. So for sole memorial there is scratched in the roadway this rude cross—Frederick Cavendish and Thomas Burke, their mark.

Lord Charlemont, Comptroller of the Viceregal household for twenty-seven years, on duty under Earl Spencer at the time of

the murders, assured me that within twenty-four hours of the commission of the crime which startled and shocked the civilised world, the Dublin police had in their possession the names of the seventeen men who took part in it. They had, however, no legally incriminating evidence. So they waited month after month, patiently watching night and day the movements of the men, drawing closer and closer the invisible mesh. Finally, on January 13, 1883, more than eight months after the crime, they swooped down on their prey, lodging them in the gaol from which five emerged only to step on to the gallows. The rest, other than the informers, were sentenced to various terms of penal servitude.

Another member of the Viceregal household told me a gruesome story in connexion with the event. As is well known, Sir George Trevelyan, carrying his life in his hands, gallantly undertook to fill the office out of which Lord Frederick Cavendish had been thrust at the point of the knife. Ten days after he had taken up his residence in the Chief Secretary's Lodge, pleasantly set among woods fronted by the gracious beauty of the Wicklow Hills, Lady Trevelyan, looking round the drawing-room with housewifely care, observed something lying under the sofa. A servant being summoned to have it removed, it turned out to be the blood-stained, dust-begrimed, knife-pierced coat of Frederick Cavendish. After the murder he was carried to the home he thus entered for the first time. The coat, taken off and thrust under the sofa, escaped the notice of the vigilant Irish housemaid.

In one of the monthly magazines to which at the time I was contributing a series of articles dated 'From Behind the Speaker's Chair,' I told this story as it was told to me. The article coming under the notice of Lord Wolseley, he wrote to me, 'I never heard the story of Lord Frederick Cavendish's coat before. How well I remember the night of that ghastly murder.'

In the following letter Sir George Trevelyan gives authoritative contradiction to a treasured tradition of the Viceregal Lodge :

' 8 Grosvenor Crescent. April 28, 1897.

' DEAR LUCY,—Lady Trevelyan and I read your article with great pleasure. As a matter of fact, the discovery of the coat was legendary ; but we did not care to notice anything in the work of one who is always so essentially accurate, and, as we have found him, so inexhaustibly friendly.

' No one has asked us about it. But Frederick Cavendish was brought to the Chief Secretary's Lodge, and the inquest took place

there, and the room and table on which the body was laid were always shown to us. But I was not there at the time. Spencer would give more certain information. My knowledge is not sufficient authority. There is a beautiful photograph of Cavendish, when laid out in flowers for the funeral. I should be inclined to ask Spencer, if you think it worth while. I am sure the body was at the Lodge, and, I thought, poor Burke's as well.

'I remain,

'Very sincerely yours,

'GEORGE TREVELYAN.'

Dramatic turns of the tragedy prevailed throughout, culminating in assassination of the informer, who fled to the Cape. News of the murders, addressed to the Home Secretary, reached London about nine o'clock on Saturday evening, May 6, 1882. Lord Hartington, as he then was, had been dining with Lord Northbrook, First Lord of the Admiralty, who had entertained the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, Lady Northbrook being afterwards 'at home' to her many friends. Lounging through the room after dinner with one hand in his trousers pocket and his expectations set upon the door that would give him exit, Hartington met Sir William Harcourt, who, calling him to one side, told him that his brother had that evening been done to death in Phoenix Park.

Some years after Harcourt told me that the news reached him in a brief telegram whilst he was dining at the Austrian Embassy. Perhaps never since dinners began at the West End of London has such a missive been handed to a guest between the soup and the fish. Gladstone, then Premier, chanced to be among the guests, and the Home Secretary, himself dazed with the terrible news, passed on the telegram. The first thought of both colleagues was of the brother of the murdered man. Harcourt set out personally in search of Hartington with intent to break the news to him as gently as possible. He found him in the scene of gaiety at the Admiralty, and there, perforce, the ghastly story was told.

## CHAPTER VI.

### FROM MY DIARY.

*February 1, 1892.*—The announcement that Arthur Balfour is to be Leader of the Unionist Party in the House of Commons in succession to W. H. Smith is a terrible blow for Goschen; may even prove a crushing one. It is not only disastrous in what it



does, but for all it implies. There has not for a long time been any question of his leading the Conservative party when in Opposition. Had he proved all the fancy of the Conservatives painted him when he was induced to cross the floor of the House and take service under Lord Salisbury, it would have been a natural, even an inevitable, thing that he should now step into the leadership of the party in the House of Commons, retain the post when in Opposition, and steadily march forward to the Premiership when Lord Salisbury abandons it. Probably that was the picture he had in his mind's eye when he took the decisive step of separating himself from the party with which he had worked all his life, and from colleagues whose counsels he had shared in and out of office for nearly a quarter of a century.

Gradually, as months passed and sessions succeeded each other, this vision must have begun to fade. The Conservative party began to murmur that they had not found such a bargain in their Chancellor of the Exchequer as they looked for. His Budgets not only did not prove sources of strength to the Ministry, but were, in two successive years, failures so hopeless that in order to avoid worse things they were given back into his hands to remodel. Then came W. H. Smith's frequent absence from the post of duty, and Goschen's opportunity of showing what he could do as leader of the House. It was significant of the situation that on these occasions he naturally took Smith's place. Everyone understood that in the ordinary course of events he would lead the Conservative party in the Commons, and these chance openings were useful as training.

It was just this opportunity that has been, politically, the death of Goschen. In the closing weeks of last session the House had an opportunity of seeing how he would do when the leadership came into his hands, and it discovered that he would not do at all. Those brought near him in the intimacy of Cabinet work speak of him as a well-intentioned man, terribly afraid of making up his mind. That in itself is a fatal objection to a candidate for the leadership. The leader of the House of Commons is constantly called upon to decide at a moment's notice, alike on matters of small detail and of Imperial importance. Goschen, hesitating and shuffling, would speedily land the House and his party in hopeless dilemma. Like all weak men, he is prone, after long hesitancy, suddenly to make up his mind in the wrong direction. In the fortnight he acted as leader, poor 'Old Morality' having at last succumbed to the toil of the session, he succeeded



in making two egregious mistakes which sealed his fate. Such blundering would have been fatal to the prospects of a Conservative bred and born. To have an alien thrust upon them who bungled in this fashion was more than the Conservative party could stand.

The situation must have been a painful one for Lord Salisbury. It is understood that when Goschen took the Conservative shilling the Premier gave him a definite pledge of succession to the leadership of the House of Commons following on the retirement of Smith. Almost up to the last day it was expected that an arrangement would be made whereby he would lead the House for what remains of the present Parliament—a period that cannot decently extend beyond the present session—and that thereafter, when the Conservatives go into opposition, Arthur Balfour should come to the front.

It was doubtless with intention of carrying out this arrangement that Lord Salisbury hastened home from his holiday haunt. But day by day it became clearer that the Conservative party will not have Goschen at any price. More than that, it had made up its mind whom it would have, and Lord Salisbury, with whatever regret at inability to keep his promise, has been forced to hand the bâton to his nephew. When the House of Commons meets it will find, in the place of anxious, painstaking, plebeian Mr. Smith, the inflexible, self-confident, aristocratic stripling who, still almost in his apprenticeship in official life, has for five years ruled Ireland with a firmness unknown since the days of Cromwell.<sup>1</sup>

*February 4, 1892.*—The death of Morell Mackenzie creates a profound feeling of sorrow throughout the wide circle to which he was personally known. The suddenness of the conclusion adds much to the painfulness of the shock. Everyone knew he was ill, but according to the pre-ultimate report he was approaching convalescence. Constitutionally he never was a strong man, being prone to attacks of asthma that sometimes prostrated him for days. A tremendous worker, he probably undermined his health by application to professional duties. Nor was he the kind of man to go quietly to bed as soon as work and dinner were over. He was always closely drawn to the theatrical profession, in whose ranks his eldest son some years ago enrolled himself. He fell into the theatrical habit of suppers, often giving elaborate midnight banquets at his own house, sometimes going out as the guest of others.

<sup>1</sup> In 1909 Lord Salisbury raised Mr. Goschen to the peerage with the rank of Viscount.

He was never so happy as when surrounded at his hospitable board by a chosen company of friends. During the summer-time he kept open house up the river, near Wargrave, from Saturday to Monday. The chance caller would be sure to meet one or more of the theatrical or musical stars refreshing themselves in anticipation of another week's toil. Almost every actor and singer on the London stage in need of the services of a throat doctor was his patient. From the poorer members of the craft he never would take a penny for services which elsewhere commanded fabulous fees.

*February 5, 1892.*—There has just come to light a curious and interesting relic connected with the old Houses of Parliament. It is a key, said to be the one used by the Lord Chamberlain of the day, going about his business on the opening of the session in search of a possible Guy Fawkes. It is nearly a foot long, of wrought iron, beautifully cut. The peculiarity about it is a hinge in the middle of the shaft, which would seem to make rather embarrassing an attempt to turn it in a lock. Picked up on the morning after the fire at the old Houses of Parliament, it was recognised by an official as the very key that unlocked the doors of the vaults beneath the Houses of Parliament.

It came into the hands of a clergyman in Essex, who presented it to the Speaker with particulars of its history. Mr. Peel thought it would more appropriately belong to the House of Commons, and has accordingly passed on the gift. When the session opens the key will be found on view in the library, shrouded in a glass case, with an inscription setting forth its strange history.

*February 6, 1892.*—A little more than three months ago Mr. Spurgeon was journeying to Mentone, travelling *en prince*, Lord Rothschild having placed at his disposal his luxurious sleeping-car. To-day the great preacher is making another railway journey, this time coming northward, lying even more profoundly at rest than when in October he stretched his weary limbs on the millionaire's couch. Yesterday the funeral procession started from the house at Mentone in which the famous preacher died, the hearse flower-laden, the coffin hidden beneath branches of palms.

It is a sad and an unexpected ending of a stubborn fight for life. Almost up to the hour at which he became unconscious Spurgeon believed he would come off triumphant. He knew his flock at the Tabernacle were praying for him night and day, and his faith in the efficacy of prayer was not to be shaken by the weariness of his own body.

He wrote to me what was probably one of the last letters penned with his own hand. He had been reading in an Australian paper a letter of mine in which reference was made to his southern flight in search of better health.

'You are most kind,' he wrote. 'The Sydney paper has given Mrs. Spurgeon and myself much pleasure. It is a great joy to her to be with me yet alive, and as great a joy to me to see her in fair health after being so long an invalid. During this week of bad weather I have not gone back—a great marvel! But my whole case has been one of the marvellous working of God in answer to the prayers of so great a multitude. It cheers me that you take so generous an interest in me. May my Lord reward you! We have just heard of the Prince's death, and all feel sorrowful sympathy with the parents and the young *fiancée*. Yours very heartily.'

It is eighteen years since I made Spurgeon's personal acquaintance. He was at the propitious moment sitting on a fence by the roadside some miles out of London, overlooking the dropping of coppers, shillings, and stray half-sovereigns into a stout box. The collection was made on behalf of the expense of building a new chapel, to which end Spurgeon contributed a stirring sermon, delivered under an historic oak-tree.

I saw a good deal of him about that time. He was celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of his beginning work in London, and talked a great deal of his early experience. He vividly remembered the day of his arrival in London. He told me he never noticed how people were dressed. But he remembered very well how he himself was arrayed when he set out from his quiet home in Waterbeach in reply to an invitation to preach a sermon at New Park Street Chapel, Southwark. Anxious to make a good appearance calculated to militate against the exceeding juvenility of his aspect, he selected a huge black-satin stock, which he wound round his neck with the happy assurance that it gave him almost a venerable air. Not to overdo it in that direction, he possessed himself of a blue handkerchief with white spots. These, of course, in addition to his ordinary Sunday clothes.

When he first came under the lights of London, a country bumpkin in his nineteenth year, he made his way to a boarding-house in Queen Square, Bloomsbury. I gathered from his conversation it was a place somewhat resembling Mrs. Todgers', where Mr. Pecksniff and his blooming daughters used to put up on their visits

to London. It was full of boarders on the night of his arrival, and they were all anxious to know what had brought this country lad to London. He felt no hesitation in telling them he was going to preach at the New Park Street Chapel, a prospect which, instead of impressing them, as he hoped it would do, rather amused them. It seemed greatly to tickle them that this country lad with his black-satin stock, and his blue handkerchief with white spots, should, in the course of a few hours, appear in a London pulpit and address grown-up men and women, heads of families. Spurgeon went to bed in a cupboard over the front door, and what with the excitement of the journey, and apprehension of what might befall him when he came to face a London congregation, he slept scarcely a wink.

Years after he wrote some lines about that memorable night, which animate the scene with the touch of a great master.

'Pitiless was the grind of the tramp in the street; pitiless the recollections of the young City clerks, whose grim propriety had gazed upon our rusticity with such amusement; pitiless the spare room which scarce afforded space to kneel; pitiless even the gas lamps which seemed to wink at us as they flickered among the December darkness. We had no friend in all that city full of human beings; we felt among strangers and foreigners, hoped to be helped through the scrape into which we had been brought, and to escape safely to the serene abodes of Cambridge and Waterbeach.'

Spurgeon, as it turned out, had come to stay, and rapidly made for himself a name and fame that will endure as long as those of Whitefield or Wesley. That he was a great preacher all the world knows. Less widely spread is acquaintance with his genius for organisation. If he had not been a preacher he might have been a general in command of an army, or a great railway director. The Tabernacle, under his direction, became the pivot of a far-reaching congeries of beneficent work. In addition to the Pastors' College, one of his earliest enterprises, there were the orphanage, an almshouse, and a school for boys and girls. Even when suffering the bodily agony from which he was rarely relieved, he cared for all these things with a personal, fatherly affection, beautiful to see.

Taking him for all in all, as preacher and worker, his too early death removed one of the four or five mightiest human influences of the age.

*February 20, 1892.*—Of Mr. Gladstone's old Cabinet colleagues who remained faithful to him after the great estrangement that followed the introduction of the Home Rule Bill, Sir William

Harcourt alone succeeded in preserving ancient friendly relations. He was one of very few with whom Mr. Chamberlain remained on speaking terms. Another unbroken friendship of even greater intimacy was maintained with Sir Henry James, with whom he ran neck to neck in the Parliamentary race, received Ministerial promotion on the same day, and worked in comradeship as a Law Officer of the Crown.

One day, in conversation, Lord Morris remarked on the charm of this incident in the storm and stress of party warfare.

'Yes,' said Harcourt, softly, with a wistful, faraway look in his eyes, 'we are, as you may say, brothers.'

'So were Cain and Abel,' said Lord Morris.

Apropos, Sir Henry James used to tell a good story. During the heat of the Home Rule struggle he went over to Paris for a few days. He there met an acquaintance who happened to have been in the House of Commons on a particular night when Sir Henry had a sharp passage of arms with his old friend Sir William Harcourt.

'Ah,' said the Frenchman, shaking him warmly by the hand, 'I see. You come over here to arrange a little *affaire* with Sir Harcourt?'

To the French mind, accustomed to the manner of the *Chambre des Députés*, a meeting with pistols or swords seemed the natural and inevitable consequence of the encounter on the floor of the House of Commons.

April 6, 1892.—Beginning to grow alarmed at accumulated evidence of personal interest taken in me by the common hangman. One Sunday afternoon, many years ago, Calcraft called upon me. I was not at home, and he left his card with a memorandum on the back stating that, having greatly enjoyed the 'Cross Bench' article in the current issue of the *Observer*, and having an idle afternoon, he thought he would drop in to make the personal acquaintance of the gifted author. And now his successor, Mr. James Berry, ex-executioner, has paid me the delicate compliment of sending me a copy of his biography, its intrinsic value much increased by the linking of my name with his in his autograph.

It is an interesting work, full of information as to the business department over which Mr. Berry long presided. It includes some reminiscences of eminent persons now no longer with us, having, indeed, literally 'dropped' out of life, with portraits, illustrations of notable prisons, and 'a scale showing the striking force of falling

bodies at different distances.' For the student of human nature the central figure of absorbing interest is the executioner himself. How Dickens would have gloated over this book, and what a fascinating interest it would have had for Thackeray! Mr. Berry, as is the case with all men successful in particular walks of life, is an enthusiast in all that relates to his profession. As he says, if it is right for men to be executed (which some people, directly concerned, strenuously deny), it is right that the office of executioner should be held respectable. He has always endeavoured to maintain the highest traditions of his post. Affable with all, especially the subjects finally committed to his charge, he has not been inclined to stand undue interference by persons in authority however highly placed.

When he first took up the work he was in the habit of applying to the Sheriff of the county whenever a 'job' was pending.

'I no longer consider it necessary,' he proudly writes, 'to apply for work in England, because I am well-known. But I still send a sample address card when an execution in Ireland is announced.'

He presents a facsimile of his card. 'James Berry, Executioner,' is its severely simple style; 'Bradford, Yorkshire,' his sufficient address. I suppose when he arrives on business at one of Her Majesty's prisons he leaves a card for the occupant of the condemned cell, with one of the corners turned down to show it has been personally delivered.

The artist's terms are 10*l.* for an execution, 5*l.* if the condemned is reprieved, together with all travelling expenses. Mr. Berry finds his own rope. There are on an average some twenty executions annually. In this business, as in others, there are slack times, and, shrinking from 'having to peruse newspaper reports in hope that a fellow-creature may be condemned to death,' Mr. Berry strongly approves the suggestion that the executioner's office should be a Government appointment, with a fixed salary. On this subject he has been in communication with Lord Aberdare, President of the Lords' Committee on Capital Punishment, and has suggested a fixed annual sum of 350*l.*, or if the Home Office prefers it, a nominal sum of 100*l.*, a year, in addition to fees paid by Sheriffs.

Lord Aberdare's reply is not included in the volume.

May 10, 1892.—A prominent and notable figure in the crowd gathered at Christie's to-day, when the art treasures of the famous house of Murietta fell under the hammer, was a distinguished-looking man, with thin pale face, parchment-like skin, set off by imperial and chin tuft, white silvery hair, closely cut, crowning his



strong intellectual head. It is more than twenty years since I last saw him, and certainly did not recognise the Henri Rochefort I knew when I was a student in the Quartier Latin and he was its hero. I have a vivid recollection of the gaslight in the Boulevard St. Michel falling on a somewhat whitened face, as Henri Rochefort, lifted shoulder-high by the students, was rapidly hurried down the broad avenue in a triumph he did not unreservedly enjoy. It was not exactly a comfortable position, his conductors being of various heights, and all much excited. Moreover, at that time (it was the month of May, 1869) Napoleon III was still on the throne, and the police, disturbed by the rumblings of the coming earthquake, were particularly active. No one could say into whose hands he might not fall when dropped from his uncomfortable elevation.

Nothing happened as a result of that evening's entertainment. Shortly after Rochefort fled, editing from Brussels his weekly *Lanterne*, which was smuggled into Paris in spite of the efforts of the police to keep it out. I remember how it was regarded in the Quartier Latin as the height of *chic* to go about with a corner of the blood-red cover of *La Lanterne* peeping forth from one's jacket pocket.

A great deal has happened since that May night, Rochefort having his full share in the changes of fortune. He still keeps up his journalistic connexion with France, editing from his house at Clarence Gate *L'Intransigeant*. The Republic for which he worked and plotted in 1869 has come at last. He gets along with it no better than he succeeded with the Empire. Under both he was proscribed. With neither is it possible for him to live in Paris. Like the Third Napoleon and Louis Philippe, the revolutionist, driven from France, seeks a home in England, and has quietly settled down in the most eminently respectable quarter of London.

It was reported a short time since that he had resolved to transfer himself and his belongings to Switzerland. He has no such intention, being content, as he well may be, with his charming residence on the borders of Regent's Park. When he is not conspiring against the authorities of the day, under whatever style they may reign, he is either arranging a duel or buying pictures. No figure is more familiar in the London sale-rooms, and during the quiet years of his residence here he has picked up some rare prizes. He loves his country too well to use any language but that it taught him, and though now regularly domiciled in London he cannot speak a word of English.

(To be continued.)



SPRAGGE'S CANYON.<sup>1</sup>

BY HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

## CHAPTER III.

## MRS. SPRAGGE BECOMES UNEASY.

## I.

GEORGE travelled back to San Lorenzo county upon the following day. By this time, he had made up his mind that Hazel was the one woman in the world for him. He thought of her as a 'daisy' and a 'peach' and a 'poppy.' She became his 'honey,' and he whistled to himself a popular song, familiar at that time to the Native Sons of the Golden West: 'I want yer, ma Honey, yes, I do.' You may be sure that he did not think of her as she really was, a town mouse, very sleek, able to perform 'parlour' tricks, and hand-fed, kept in a fine cage from which, possibly, she was eager to escape.

First and last she was a perfect lady.

He took the ramshackle stage between San Lorenzo and the village of Aguila, sitting beside the driver, Zedekiah Byles, who in his day (long past) had handled six-horse teams, and been 'held up' by noted bandits. Uncle Zed was a *laudator temporis acti*. Now, in senile decay, he drove a lean pair of ill-groomed 'plugs' hitched to an ancient buckboard!

His age was not, however, garrulous. He had survived a gallant band of men who reckoned talk to be cheap. He despised chin musicians, and pretended to be deaf as well as dumb when he carried drummers (bagmen). But he had an honest affection for George Spragge, believing with Van Horne that the young fellow had plenty of horse-sense. He was prepared, also, to hear George roundly abusing city ways and city folk. Whenever George returned from San Francisco, the country milk in him seemed to have soured after contact with the rennet of the metropolis. George would expand his mighty chest and inhale the odours of

<sup>1</sup> Copyright, 1914, by H. A. Vachell, in the United States of America.

hill and sea, exclaiming: 'Old socks, ain't this fine? Gee! I'm about petered out; sick to my stomach I am of city folk. What ails 'em—eh?'

'Everything, by Ginger!' Uncle Zed would reply. 'The railroad played h—ll first; now it's them stinkin' automobiles; to-morrow it'll be flyin' machines. Sick? I'm ashamed o' lingerin' on in such dirty times.'

Such talk used to warm their simple hearts.

To Uncle Zed's amazement and disgust, George seemed to have changed. In the first place, he was wearing his new blue-serge suit. He looked a—dude! He might have been mistaken for a blatant and smug young drummer, bursting with conceit and ignorance. To the stage-driver's first query: 'Enjoyed yerself, up thar?' with scathing scorn upon the 'thar,' George replied gaily: 'First-rate.'

Mr. Byles said nothing for half an hour, while George hummed to himself: 'I want yer, ma Honey, yes, I do.' When the old mission town lay well behind them, and the road to Aguila long and white in front, Uncle Zed growled through his big grizzled moustache:

'Fixed up, you air! Lady-killin' outfit, too, or I'm a liar.'

'A lady helped me to fix up, Uncle.'

'I knew it! Messin' about with a city madam! Soft snap you was, I reckon. Picked a lemon, she did.'

'I had to have my picture taken, with the bird. It's dead, old man.'

'I ain't sturprised. Died o' grief after seein' you in these yere duds. Nex' thing you'll be tellin' me is that yer married to a city girl.'

'Why not?' demanded George boldly. 'I ain't going to bach it for ever and ever. San Francisco is full o' pretty girls, the daisiest crowd, and I've sorter fixed it up to bring the daisiest o' the lot down here. See?'

'Yer a blamed fool. I see that plain enough.'

George laughed.

'Why shouldn't I pick and choose amongst the best in the land? I've picked a peach, a perfect lady.'

'Is she like yer Maw?'

George said hastily:

'Not exactly.'

'I reckon yer Maw to be as near perfection as a woman kin be.'

And I give you credit for pickin' another jest like her, if sech another could be found. I allowed that sech another couldn't be found in any doggoned city. Allers I've mistrusted appearances in womenfolk and horses. Pretty, is she? Whitey face, and a spindlin' figure! Peek-a-boo shirt-waist, I'll bet! High-falutin' manners, and mighty clever and slick as a talker, but a dam fool around a wash-tub or a stove!

George laughed again, but he was impressed and perturbed. It occurred to him that his mother might reasonably ask for information in regard to Hazel's domestic qualifications. Suppose that Hazel was a dam fool around a stove? What of it! She was clever enough to learn. It would be a privilege for his mother to teach her. He began to be angry with his old friend, saying irritably:

'A girl can be pretty an' good, an' able to take aholt and run a house accordin' to Hoyle!'

'Samanthy is true to that brand.'

'Samanthy?'

'I allers thought that Samanthy and you had fixed it up to git married some day. She's just right. Your Maw has trained her to be yer wife. We've all known it. It makes me tired that you hadn't the gumption to know it. Now, yer goin' home to break two honest hearts, and you'd like me to say that yer a smart young man. Wal, George, what I think of you, I'll jest keep to myself; also, I couldn't hope to do the subjec' justice. Since I come down to drivin' two instead o' six, I've lost the gift o' language; but don't you ask me to drive no city madams to Spragge's Canyon.'

## II.

At Aguila, George descended from the stage, and changed into his old clothes, not forgetting the white silk handkerchief round his neck. Then he borrowed a saddle-horse to ride over to the canyon. As he rode, he pondered in his heart what Mr. Byles had said. Before leaving, he told the old man that nothing was settled. A young lady might, or might not, come as a visitor to Spragge's Canyon. That was all. Uncle Zed replied tartly: 'And quite enough, too'; but he had promised to keep his mouth shut. George felt that any gossip about Hazel would be abominable.

This news about Samantha was upsetting. The more so, because he was sure of its truth. It hit him, as he would have

expressed it, bang in the eye! Samantha had been trained by his mother to become his wife. And everybody knew it. This fully accounted for what his mother had said when they stood together by his father's grave.

He felt angry with her because she had not spoken out plainly. If she had——? He answered this question honestly. If she had told all the truth, he, probably, would have stepped into line. The 'horse-sense' of such a proposition appealed to him.

Now, it was too late. Hazel had risen above his horizon, filling the future with light and sweetness. What a darling! As he approached the homestead, his eyes became keener. He swept the skies, looking for turkey buzzards, whose presence might indicate a calf or a colt cast in some gulch. The grim scavengers were not in sight.

He drew rein upon the top of the grade which descended sharply into the canyon. The ranch had doubled in value at the precise moment when it dawned upon him that Hazel liked him, that she might learn to love him, that he, by Gum! was man enough to make her love him. The canyon became sacrosanct because it might be her home.

He flung his right leg over the horn of the saddle, and slid to the ground. Then he tightened the cinch, for a steep path, a short cut downhill, led to the corral. A reek of blue smoke rose from the kitchen chimney. In the corral were the cows. Samantha was milking. He could see her faded sun-bonnet. His mother was cooking supper, something extra nice for a tired traveller. George sighed, whistled, and tried to suck comfort from the scenery, so familiar from childhood, but now making a strange appeal to a man about to assume new responsibilities. The sea fog was rolling in from the ocean, driven by the trade wind. The land breeze, which had kept the fog at bay during the daytime, was failing. The sun, declining into the sea, still shone strongly, extracting subtly the odours of herbs and flowers. Upon the hills the cattle were grazing quietly. The crickets were shrilling in the grass; from the small marsh near the sand-dunes at the mouth of the canyon swelled the chorus of the frogs, singing vespers. And from the northern headland, now hidden by fog, boomed the solemn warning note of a whistling buoy.

Men like George Spragge are not blessed or cursed with too much imagination. This young fellow, to whom pain and sorrow and poverty were strangers, had always accepted his environment

as being inalienably his. He had lived joyously and simply in the present, wandering at rare intervals into the past. He had never taken into account the feelings and sensibilities of others, although it must not be inferred that he was selfish or heartless. Hitherto, the appearance of his mother and Samantha was not likely to excite anxiety. When neighbours asked the usual question :

'Wal, George, how's the folks ?' he could reply with conviction :  
'Fine !'

Now, the barbed shaft of Uncle Zed Byles had transfixed his honest heart. He groaned aloud when he reflected that Samantha had been trained for him, and that he had never known it. Why, in thunder, couldn't women act as men did ? Why play 'possum ?

In this mood, half-resentful, half-sorrowful, he descended the steep slope and approached the corral. Samantha saw him, but went on milking. Cows must be stripped. George put his horse into the barn, and came back to her. She turned a pink comely cheek to receive the customary kiss. Squirming inwardly, George saluted his cousin, and asked perfunctorily how she fared. Samantha made the cut-and-dried reply :

'First-rate.'

'The bird's dead,' said George.

'You got your money for him ?'

'Yep.'

There was an awkward pause, as the girl gazed at the man with an expression upon her face which he had wit enough to recognise as interrogative. Her large innocent eyes indicated an ingenuous and simple character, and yet—prying beneath the smooth soft skin—George was vouchsafed a glimpse of an emotional nature tintured by ignorance concerning itself. He guessed that shyness and self-consciousness were oppressing her, as they were oppressing him.

'Sold the rattlers too ?'

'Van Horne wants more o' them.'

'We was expectin' you back day before yesterday.'

'I stopped over.'

'It's mighty lonesome when you're away.'

'But Maw and you git on fine ?'

'Oh, yes.'

Each was conscious of restraint. George wanted to leave her, but habit prevented his doing so. Always, when he returned

home, Samantha and he would exchange just so much small talk. He said jerkily :

'Back-fence all right?'

'Yes; I went around it yesterday. That old muley-faced steer is with our cattle. It beats all how he gits in.'

'Wanders round by the road.'

'I located a bee-tree near the north-west corner. Nothing else new on the ranch. Meet any folks up in the city?'

As she put the question Samantha was milking. George affected not to hear her. He said briskly :

'I'm mighty glad I don't live in Oakland.'

He rolled a cigarette, lit it, and walked slowly out of the cow-coral. Samantha's eyes followed him wistfully. She hoped that he would look back and nod, but he quickened his pace as he passed through the gate. Samantha sighed, murmuring to the cow :  
'What's his hurry?'

Instinct warned her that something had happened. George was 'different.' His voice held new intonations; his laugh had ceased to be spontaneous; his glance wavered and fell beneath hers. Was he beginning to care? Had her feelings warmed him?

George, meanwhile, was approaching the house. He strode into the kitchen, where the fragrance of beans and bacon greeted him pleasantly. He wondered, however, whether beans and bacon as a regular diet would agree with Hazel Goodrich. And he could not help contrasting his stout mother with the good aunt, an attenuated spinster with small delicate hands, more accustomed to fancy sewing than plain cooking.

He kissed his mother and sat down. Obviously, this was not a moment for full confession, but the ways, so to speak, might be soaped. He said carelessly :

'Had a nice trip.'

Mrs. Spragge nodded, as she murmured :

'Mighty glad to get back, I reckon?'

'The bird's dead.'

He pulled out of his pocket a much-crumpled copy of the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

'My picture,' he remarked, handing it to his mother. Mrs. Spragge wiped her hands, and then put on her spectacles. She glanced with pride at the 'picture,' and then read, very deliberately, the short explanatory notice.

'You've bin photographed in a new suit o' clothes, George?'

'Yep. Mrs. Van Horne fixed me up. The photograph from which that was done is being framed—for you.'

'Got an extra one for Samantha, my son?'

She looked at him keenly. George was conscious of a blush, as he answered hastily:

'Nope.'

He divined that his mother was sparring for an opening. They eyed each other contemptively. The slightly bovine expression of the woman was reflected upon her son's face.

'She kin have mine.'

'Why?'

'Oh, because——!'

'Because—what?'

'The child ain't got a picture of you. It would just tickle her to death. Yas, she kin have mine, frame an' all.'

'I tell you I got it for you. Ain't you got the first call on it?'

The defiance in his tone was not wasted. Mrs. Spragge went back to her stove in impressive silence.

'What you mean, mother?'

'I think,' replied Mrs. Spragge, with conviction, 'that you well know what I mean.'

George frowned as he left the kitchen, uneasily sensible that home had become of a sudden less sweet, and that his mother was a too dominating personality. He wished that he had not changed into his old duds. In the blue-serge suit, fortified by white collar and tie, he might have coped more effectively with a situation which exacted urban subtlety and intelligence. He felt singularly cheap as he went back to the barn.

### III.

In the wilderness, meals, as a rule, are consumed rapidly and in silence. Afterwards, when the dishes have been washed up and put away, and when the women pick up their sewing, matters of importance are discussed. George was well into his second pipe before Mrs. Spragge and Samantha joined him on the front porch. By this time he was feeling at his ease. Moreover, the short twilight was falling, and soon it would be almost dark. Tell-tale blushes would not then be perceived. He wasted no time beating bushes.

'I met a young lady in Oakland,' he began, and then paused.



Mrs. Spragge inhaled her breath sharply, a sibilant signal of distress. Samantha bent over her knitting.

'A young lady,' repeated Mrs. Spragge calmly.

'Young and pretty—*high toned*. Miss Hazel Goodrich.'

His mother repeated the name, savouring it on her tongue.

'She owns,' said George, 'an elegant residence on Magnolia Avenoo, Oakland. The white marble steps cost more'n this house and barn put together.'

'Sakes!' exclaimed Samantha.

'It surprised me,' continued George. 'Her father raised cherries, and this one daughter. No sons. Miss Goodrich is well fixed.'

'Where did you meet her?' asked the mother.

'On a cable car. It was mighty easy to get acquainted with her. No frills, you understand! Just a perfect lady, finely educated, and pretty as a painted wagon!'

Every word, every inflection, sank deep into the minds of those listeners. Samantha's needles clicked more swiftly. Mrs. Spragge nodded her massive head.

'Pretty, but peaky-faced,' continued George. 'I showed her my condor, and she asked me to call around. I did so. She lives with her auntie, a spindling old hen not much on the cackle. I talked some about the ranch. Miss Goodrich was kind o' interested. Later, the Van Hornes told me how she was fixed. Day before yesterday, I told her—he addressed his mother—that you'd be mighty well pleased to see her here.'

'How did you know that, my son, seein' as the young lady is a stranger to me?'

'Wal, I allowed that you'd jest naturally cotton on to her as—as I did. She needs a breath o' fresh air the worst kind. Nerves a bit out o' whack! I'm a liar if she didn't nearly keel over at sight o' my rattlers. I'd like mighty well to have her down here for a spell, if you two feel like it.'

Samantha said quickly:

'It's a pretty name—Hazel Goodrich.'

'Marble steps!' murmured Mrs. Spragge.

'They cut no ice with her. She make fun of 'em. She'll be happy as a clam down here. Wal, there it is! I wouldn't bring no young lady here unless it was agreeable to you two. It's up to you to say just what you think about it.'

'If you've asked her——!'

'I hev'n't—yet. I aim to go back to Oakland to fetch her, if you feel like entertainin' her.'

'But you'll do that,' said Samantha.

'I'll try. Is it O.K., mother?'

Mrs. Spragge hesitated, but only for an instant. Then she said stiffly:

'We'll do our best, my son. We're rough folks, livin' on a rough ranch. Our ways are not city ways. I fear me Miss Goodrich may find Spragge's Canyon a bit dull.'

'Never,' affirmed George. 'Dull? After Oakland? Not much!'

He burst out laughing. Was there a man, woman, or child in all the wide world who could pronounce Spragge's Canyon dull?

#### IV.

Two days later, George mounted the marble steps of the Goodrich residence with beaming face and a heart bursting with hope. His mother and Samantha had been real good—as he expressed it—making things easy instead of hard, each fertile in suggestion concerning the comfort of an unwelcome guest. It is true, none the less, that there had been an understanding between them. Beneath the elder woman's bovine placidity lay a rich vein of commonsense, the precious heritage of the wives and daughters of the pioneers. Long after George had gone to sleep, these two faithful creatures sat talking and thinking; and if there was less talk than sophisticated folk might have reasonably indulged in, the current of thought below ran deeper and stronger. Mrs. Spragge broke the ice by remarking solemnly:

'I want her to come, Samanthu. We must be extry nice, but—!'

Samantha nodded, with a faint smile about the corners of her mouth. Mrs. Spragge continued:

'If she ain't the right kind, dearie, she'll give herself away in little things. It'll be our business to see that she does give herself away, dead away, before him.'

Samantha said hesitatingly:

'Maybe she is the right kind.'

'Not she.'

'But—if she should be?'

'Tain't possible. Wal, you know what I wish—?'

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'Please don't,' murmured Samantha.

'Like to like is my motter,' said Mrs. Spragge trenchantly. 'Never did hold with crossin' breeds. I mind me when George mixed up the dish-faced Berkshires with them Poland China hogs. No good never come o' that. Sakes! what a different world this would be if mothers hed the right to choose their sons' wives.'

Samantha sighed. She had reason to know that George possessed a will nearly as strong as his mother's. And love for this unknown quantity was exuding from every pore of his skin. The man who could scale cliffs to capture young condors would surely leap from obstacle to obstacle in pursuit of a perfect lady!

'There's another thing,' said Mrs. Spragge, after a lengthy pause, 'we don't know as she cares for him. Maybe this means nothing more than a bit of a spree. Wild honey may sour on her. Once I took a notion myself to have a sort o' bust in the city.'

'You?'

'Yes, *me*, child. 'Tis woman's nature to crave most for what ain't easy to git. I was married, too. But Mr. Spragge humoured me. He'd sense enough not to laugh at me outside; but inside he must hev been splittin' his sides. Anyways, he allowed that I wanted a change, and he said we'd have a good time in the city. He said if I wanted to waller in pleasure, he'd stand in. We went up by steamer. There wa'n't no railroad. I started in by bein' terr'ble sea-sick, but I wouldn't let on to him that I wa'n't enjoyin' myself. When we got to the city, we let ourselves rip. Mr. Spragge was mighty clever. He made me see everything, and do everything, and eat everything. Gracious! we went to bed foundered every night! At the end o' four days, I said I'd hed enough; but he wouldn't listen to that. He kep' on and on till my head was splittin' and every bone in my body achin'. Finally, I got real mad, and I told him I was goin' back home alone.'

'He kicked at that, I reckon.'

'Not he. I tell you, child, Mr. Spragge was brainy—no common man. He let me think city life was gettin' ahold of him. He allowed that he'd tasted blood, and was thirstin' for more. I dassn't leave him alone, so I put in another four days, the awfullest I ever spent in my life. Then we come home together—and stayed there. It's bin mighty sweet ever since.'

Again Samantha nodded.

'You think,' she murmured tentatively, 'that comin' here may work that a way with Miss Goodrich?'

'I hope it will,' said Mrs. Spragge.

George, of course, ascended the marble steps in blissful unconsciousness of these women's wiles. Indeed, he had come to the pleasant conviction that his mother was yearning to embrace Miss Goodrich with a passion nearly as masterful as his own. The spare room was being prepared for his future wife; chickens were penned and being fattened. Roses would be flung before the prettiest feet in California.

Hazel received him calmly.

The young man exclaimed excitedly:

'I've fixed things.'

'Fixed things, Mr. Spragge?'

'At the ranch. Mother would like you to come to us first-rate, and she hopes you'll stay on as long as you can stick it. There's a saddle-horse for you, a single-footer, and I've bought a new hair-mattress for the spare bed. What's the matter with starting out to-morrow?'

'I see; you've been home.'

'Wherever else did you think I'd been?'

'I—wondered.'

Her eyes softened sweetly, for the dust of travel lay upon the blue-serge suit. Obviously, he had gone and returned as swiftly as possible.

'How far is your ranch from the railroad?'

'Twenty miles and more.'

'Oh! Thank you!'

'How's that?'

'You have taken a journey of nearly four hundred miles by train, and driven forty miles to make preparations for a visitor who has not promised to come to you?'

His face fell. Very ruefully, he muttered:

'Thunder and Mars! It ain't possible that you'll let me down by not coming?'

She laughed softly.

'Tell me, please, why you took it for granted that I would come?'

'You said you might! Don't you like me?'

'Ye-es.'

'Didn't we cotton to each other at the drop o' the flag? I never did doubt that you would come, provided, o' course, that

I could fix things up with the womenfolks. We're going to have a H——, I should say, a star-spangled picnic together. We're a-going fishin'; we're a-going ridin' into the hills, and you'll get the smell o' tarweed and sage and wild lilac into your blood. We're a-goin' sailin' in my boat. I'll learn you to steer. Hav'n't you ever wanted to *do* things? Ain't you fed up with frills? Can you breathe deep and good in Oakland?'

Hazel stared hard into his eager face, flushed by health and enthusiasm. Wilbur P. Stocker never talked like this. Once again those enticing little thrills chased each other up and down her spinal column. She answered truthfully, but with an adorable hesitation:

'I don't know that I have ever breathed deep and good.'

'I'll learn you to do it. There's a stretch o' bunchgrass in our back pasture, nigh upon a mile in length, a nice gentle slope. We'll gallop together up that without drawin' rein. At the top o' the slope you can see the ocean stretchin' everlastingly. T'other side lies the Coast Range, and the pines and redwoods. You'll be standin' with me between the mountains and the sea. And you'll be breathin' deep and good. And I'll be lookin' at you; and by God! you'll be just three times as beautiful as you are now.'

His voice trembled and broke. Then she whispered:

'I'll come.'

## CHAPTER IV.

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF SPRAGGE'S CANYON.

#### I.

AFTERWARDS, analysing the motives which lured her from Oakland, Hazel remembered that she had taken certain things for granted. A ranch, for instance, in a wild cow-country, meant to her an immense tract of land, a pastoral paradise, whereon wandered flocks and herds innumerable. She pictured a substantial adobe house crowning a small hill, park-like land, an orchard and vineyard, barns full of sweet-smelling hay, many corrals—in fine, a patriarchal establishment of peace and plenty.

She found, as we know, the home of a squatter.

George drove her from San Lorenzo to the canyon. He drove well, with a mastery of his horses which even Hazel could appreciate.

But once, during that long drive, she was terrified. Coming down a steep hill with a cliff to the right and a precipice to the left the brake slipped, and the spring-wagon began to move faster than the horses. George said cheerfully :

'Sit tight.'

He whipped up his team. Hazel beheld a landscape flashing by, a phantasmagoria of galloping bushes and rocks and trees. She shut her eyes, knowing that she would scream if she kept them open. The buckboard seemed to be leaping through space and falling into bottomless abysses. She could hear George's voice, speaking quietly to his horses. She wondered vaguely how he managed to speak so quietly, for he must be terrified too.

'Nasty turn a-comin',' said George. 'You hang on to me.'

She obeyed, gripping him desperately. They reached the bottom of the hill with a crash which unhooked a trace and cracked the pole of the wagon. George laughed, as he jumped down to look to his gear.

'Close call,' he remarked ; 'but you wasn't scared ?'

Hazel laughed. It was on the tip of her tongue to exclaim : 'Why I was scared to death !'

The expression upon George's face gave her pause. She realised that he was staring at her with an unmistakable look in his eyes, a look that would vanish if she told the truth. To her other *beaux* she would have confessed honestly, sensible that such a confession from so pretty and fragile a girl would arouse sympathy. Perhaps these more sophisticated specimens of manhood would have laughed to scorn any affirmation of courage, stigmatising it as 'swank.' And deep down in her heart was the conviction that this man, so different from the others, did regard her as a weak feminine creature, one to be protected and loved, but inferior to the male in those essential qualities which are masculine. She glimpsed an immense opportunity of impressing George ; and dare we blame her for seizing it ? There is a superb *charlatanerie* about some American young women, the inordinate desire to appear better and cleverer and stronger than they really are.

She laughed again with genuine mirth.

'You was not scared ?' repeated George.

She salved her conscience with an evasive reply—

'Why should I be ?' she asked sweetly.

He was enchanted. The subtle compliment to himself percolated to his marrow. He exclaimed enthusiastically :

'Gee! You are a little wonder! And you had sense enough to claw my waist, not my arm. That puts the lid on! Well, we shall be in good shape again in two jiffs.'

Hazel watched him at work, admiring his dexterity in repairing without adequate tools the damage wrought by that swift descent. He twisted a whipping of cord about the cracked pole, and re-adjusted the brake. Then he turned to his passenger.

'Tom Holloway went over that turn with a four-horse team and a load of barley.'

'What happened?'

'Three horses killed, and the wagon smashed to flinders. Tom jumped. He broke his leg in two places. There's barley sproutin' down there now. You look.'

Hazel looked and shuddered. For an instant she had a vision of herself in a casket lined with white satin. Wilbur P. Stocker in *sable*, with face *argent* and eyes *gules*, was laying white flowers upon the casket. Friends would not be invited to view the 'remains,' because not more than fifty per cent. had been collected!

'We might both be dead,' she murmured.

'Spragges ain't easy killed,' said George cheerfully. He looked at Hazel, now pink with a diffused sense of gratitude, and said once more:

'Beats me you wasn't scared. Never screamed! Never said a word! Just sat tight and made good! I must tell Zed Byles about this.'

'Who is Zed Byles?'

'Uncle Zed used to drive a six-horse stage. He ain't got no use for city madams. If he'd seen you just now smiling at Death he'd allow that the drinks were on him.'

'Would he? Have you been talking to Mr. Byles about me?'

'If you ain't cute——!'

'Have you?'

George was sitting beside her, and the horses were slowly ascending an easy grade.

'Yes, I hev.'

Hazel frowned.

'Do you talk about me to men like that?'

'I talk about you, and think about you, and dream about you. You're the daisiest girl I ever struck, and I don't care a continental who knows it.'

Hazel's laugh was delightful, but she said gravely enough:



'I expect you've aroused expectations which won't be satisfied?'

George did not reply. At the top of the next hill a fine panoramic view of the Aguila Rancho excited Hazel's enthusiasm. She pointed to the ancient adobe and asked eagerly:

'Is that your house?'

George looked slightly astonished. Obviously Hazel had no sense of distance.

'Why, we've not come more'n half way yet. That's an old Spanish grant. It belonged to Don Juan Aguila. A rich New Yorker owns it. He asked me to run it. Twenty thousand acres!'

'Why didn't you?'

The sharpness of her tone challenged his attention. Perhaps at that moment he sensed the business instinct, characteristic of Western young women.

He answered slowly: 'I hev my own ranch.'

'Is it as big as this?'

'Gee! Three hundred and twenty acres. That's all, and quite enough, too.'

'Quite a small ranch.'

'Big enough for me.' As she remained contemplatively silent, he continued: 'And I'm my own boss. Hit or miss, that's everything, everything.'

Strong feeling lent emphasis to the words. Hazel said gently:

'I suppose a man must do some disagreeable things if he wishes to climb high. I have a friend, Mr. Stocker, of Stocker's Landing. He owns Stocker's Landing, but he's managing director of another big business. He is serving his own interests, which are large, by serving others.'

She picked her words daintily, as became a maid who belonged to a Browning Society and other associations more or less identified with self-improvement. George listened respectfully, wondering whether her talk would impress his women-folk as 'high-falutin'; wondering also, with profounder interest, whether she was trying to teach him, the Man, how to manage his own affairs. He said crisply:

'I ain't built that way. Spragge's Canyon lies over thar, beyond that ridge. From the pines you can see *our* house.'

Unconsciously, his voice softened as the pronoun fell from his lips. Hazel blushed. Did he mean it? Was this son of the soil taking too much for granted? Or—less agreeable thought—did his mother own a half-interest in three hundred and twenty acres?

George pointed with his whip at the distant ridge, crowned by three pines. Between Hazel and those distant pines lay the most beautiful portion of the Aguila Rancho, rolling pastures rich in feed, well watered by clear creeks, upon whose banks sycamores and cotton-trees spread their shade, sheltering fat beeves beneath their heavy branches. She told herself that she would love to be queen of this lordly rancho, to entertain friends within the ancient *adobe*, to dispense that lavish Spanish hospitality which had become a gracious tradition in this beautiful southern country, this land of perpetual spring. She glanced at the man at her side, 'sizing him up,' comparing him with the others, keenly conscious of his strength and beauty, noting the thews and sinews of a conqueror. Obviously, he lacked the 'push' which distinguished Wilbur P. Stocker, although he could kill poor Wilbur with one hand. Then she heard George's voice close to her ear—

'Say! Are you breathin' deep and good?'

Was she? At the words she inhaled the soft warm air, feeling it penetrating to her very heart with subtle influence and suggestion. Oakland seemed far away, something of a dark blot upon the faint horizon. Arcadia was greeting her, bidding her welcome, kissing her cheek with its beguiling zephyrs!

'It's perfectly lovely,' she admitted.

'Wait till you see the ocean.'

She waited in blissful silence. George said nothing to disturb her thoughts. Perhaps he divined some of those thoughts; perhaps he had known how tremendous the appeal of Arcadia may be to the tired dweller in cities. The road, being the property of a millionaire, was free from chuck-holes and reasonably smooth of surface. The horses worked well into their collars. The buck-board travelled swiftly. Hazel closed her eyes as her heart began to beat more quickly. To what was she hastening?

'Look!' exclaimed George.

Triumph informed his tones, the pride of the man of great possessions.

Hazel opened her eyes to behold the majestic ocean. No fog or mist obscured its glory, no wind disturbed its placid surface. The immensity of it, seen from a height, made the girl gasp.

'Nothing between us and Japan,' said George, 'but blue water. And it's smilin' at you.'

She thrilled with his excitement, able for the moment to share it and understand it. There is a curious vein of sentiment in

men who lead primitive lives, the stronger because rarely indeed does it crop to a rough surface. Trappers, miners, fishermen are saturated with a sense of beauty which such men are incapable of expressing in words. Under stress of some overpowering emotion they may, in halting phrase, attempt to convey what they feel, but such attempts end in a stutter and silence. Better so than the too glib periods of the accomplished orator!

'In five minutes,' said George, 'you'll have your first squint at the canyon.'

She knew then that the canyon was a bigger thing to him than the Pacific.

## II.

Mrs. Spragge embraced her when she descended, covered with fine white dust, from the buckboard. Samantha held out her hand. The women took stock of each other as they stood for an instant upon the front porch, while George drove his team to the barn.

'Come right in,' said Mrs. Spragge genially. 'You're most petered out, I reckon. Ain't them chuck-holes awful?'

It was a shock, even to a young woman born beneath the Stars and Stripes, and ready to affirm, particularly to foreigners, that all Americans are exalted above the odious class distinctions of effete kingdoms and empires. Nevertheless, being young and at the end of a tedious journey, she—so to speak—shut both eyes and plunged gallantly into an adventure the more exciting because it was other than what she had deemed it to be. She heard her hostess saying: 'This is the parlour. We shall eat supper in here, seein' we've comp'ny. The guest-chamber is upstairs.'

Hazel smiled sweetly. The parlour might have measured seventeen feet by fifteen. It was scrupulously clean. The ceiling had been papered, but the walls were whitewashed. Upon this austere background hung a few framed photographs and half a dozen chromolithographs. Above the mantelpiece Hazel remarked a vile wood-engraving of Abraham Lincoln. Upon the bare boards lay a small rag carpet, evidently of home manufacture. Plain muslin curtains embellished the windows. A parlour 'suite,' originally crude in colour and form, had been toned down by the kindly touch of Time. On a round table lay the family Bible, flanked by four or five books, such as are sold by book-agents—

books badly printed upon thin cheap paper, and meretriciously bound in much-tooled morocco. A clock, with an aggressive tick, served to remind all idlers that the passing seconds on a ranch could not be wasted with impunity.

These rude furnishings seemed to Hazel to be the epitome and expression of her hostess. They were clean with her cleanliness, mutely eloquent of an order which was hers, worn by use not abuse, uncompromisingly simple and sincere. Hazel felt instantly that this room held no secrets save such as could be honourably revealed in due season. A half-opened door revealed a closet with many shelves upon which stood pots of jam, bottles of pickles and preserves, cordials, and dried herbs. One could not conceive of a skeleton in such a closet!

'It's like you,' said Hazel to Mrs. Spragge.

No happier speech could have fallen from her pretty lips. Mrs. Spragge answered genially:

'That's so. I'd never thought o' that. Yes, it's me slicked up. Will you come upstairs, Miss Goodrich?'

The three ascended a wooden narrow staircase, and entered a room which smelt faintly of apples.

'We kep' our Newtowns an' Winter Pearmains in here,' explained Mrs. Spragge, 'but the smell is nearly gone, and it ain't onpleasant.

'I like it,' Hazel declared.

'I do hope, dear, we can make you nice and comfortable.'

'I'm sure you can. The canyon is perfectly lovely.'

'It's sweetly pretty and quiet. There ain't a prettier place anywheres in these parts. And the berries are the first to ripen in the county. You'll taste our honey at supper.'

'Do you grow berries to sell?'

'Didn't George tell you that? Yes, we grow berries, and raise chickens and ducks, and colts and calves—a little mite of everything. We make out fine. There's quail and deer, and trout in the creek, and clams on the beach, and plenty of fish in the ocean. Nobody could want more.'

Presently George appeared with Hazel's trunk. He vanished immediately. Mrs. Spragge descended to the kitchen, whence arose savoury odours, incense for an honoured guest. Samantha remained to help Hazel unpack.

'My!' exclaimed the country girl, 'you do have the loveliest things!'

The garments were laid upon the bed. Samantha experienced a pang when she beheld them. She noted, too, how Hazel's delicate fingers hovered over the filmy laces and cambrics.

'You love pretty things?' asked Samantha.

'Oh, yes. Don't you?'

'I've never had 'em,' replied Samantha grimly.

'I made most of them.'

'You did?'

'Yes, I sew rather well.'

'You're an expert,' said Samantha solemnly. Hazel, for the second time that day, realised that she was appreciated. She guessed that this large, capable, silent young woman could do almost anything with her hands except fine needlework.

'An expert? Oh, no. I could easily teach you.'

'Never! Not in a year o' Sundays. And if I owned this'—she held up a nightgown,—'I'd put it away and look at it sometimes, mebbe. I couldn't wear it.'

Hazel was amused.

'Why not? I'd like to give you that nightie. Take it, and wear it to-night.'

'You're mighty kind, but I can't accept it. 'Twould make everything I've got look cheap and common.'

'What nonsense!'

'It's how I feel.'

Slowly the two girls looked at each other, trying to peer beneath the surface. Hazel beheld what she had expected to find, the country cousin, a thought more comely than was quite agreeable, but otherwise negligible as a rival. Samantha beheld the 'city girl,' trained in all the arts that please men, armed *cap-à-pie* for conquest. And she had conquered—irresistible charmer! Valiantly Samantha faced the inevitable, telling herself that the victory was already won by this dainty smiling girl, so sure of herself, so convinced in her own mind that Miss Hazel Goodrich was exactly 'right.'

Hazel, accustomed to having her own way, refused to take Samantha seriously:

'You must wear it—to please me. I'm sure we're going to be good friends.'

She held out the garment, twisting a small knot of baby-ribbon into place.

'No,' said Samantha, with finality.

## III.

Alone in her own room, Samantha peered into a small glass which hung above the washstand. What she saw failed to please, for she muttered savagely :

'Hayseed !'

She sat down upon the edge of the bed, folding her hands upon her lap. Objects familiar from childhood exercised a soothing influence. This small room, bare of luxuries, was the girl's sanctuary. In it, particularly at night, she became herself ; she achieved detachment from Mrs. Spragge and her masterful son. And, very rarely, there occurred illuminating moments when she got outside her work-a-day self. At such times she could see this normal self with almost uncanny clearness ; she became the derisive judge and critic, the looker-on who marks every move of the game.

Such a moment came now, when she was about to make her simple preparations for the evening meal. In the top drawer of the bureau lay a new shirt-waist carefully designed to find favour in George's sight. Beneath it was a clean white skirt and a somewhat skimpy sash of cheap ribbon. At the bottom of the drawer were under-things stout and serviceable, so stout indeed that they could defy a hurricane when pinned upon a clothes-line. The ordinary trade wind, so Samantha reflected, would work havoc with Hazel's flimsy cambrics.

She rose from the bed frowning, pulled open the drawer and took from it her best things, eyeing them with superlative derision. One can imagine the same derision upon the face of the President of a South American Republic when he returns to his obsolete cruiser, the pride of a tiny navy, after a visit to some modern battleship.

Samantha held up the shirt-waist, noting its cut and the edging of cheap lace upon the short sleeves.

'You silly idiot,' she murmured.

Then she washed her hands, tidied her hair, and went downstairs, walking into the kitchen with her chin cocked at a defiant angle. Mrs. Spragge glanced at her.

'Ain't you going to fix up any ?' asked the elder woman.

'No.'

'She's pretty, Samanthy, and nice-mannered, and—I may as well say it—I can't help likin' her.'

'Nor can I,' said Samantha. She continued deliberately: 'That's what she was made for—to be liked and made much of. And as clever with her needle as with her tongue.'

Mrs. Spragge nodded, but she said dolorously:

'When I seen her, I said to myself—it might hev been worse.'

At supper Hazel sparkled. George, of course, told the tale of that close call.

'She made good,' he repeated half a dozen times. And this repetition produced its effect. Hazel perceived that Mrs. Spragge and Samantha were visibly impressed. She grasped the fact that courage is the king-virtue of those who dwell in the wilderness. Hitherto, such knowledge had come to her at second-hand, gleaned from newspapers and books. Also, she had wit enough to deepen a fine impression by affecting to make light of it. She silenced George with an uplifted hand, the prettiest hand ever seen in Spragge's Canyon.

'You mustn't say another word,' she commanded. 'Already I can feel my head swelling.'

Another surprise awaited Mrs. Spragge and Samantha. Haze praised the cooking with discrimination and knowledge. Whereupon Mrs. Spragge remarked incredulously:

'Why, child, you can't cook?'

'Yes, I can'—she displayed a dimple; 'I won the first prize at a chafing-dish competition. I can make all sorts of delicious things. You must let me show you what I can do with your clams.'

'Well, I'm jiggered,' said George. 'Next thing you'll be telling us is that you can wash clothes.'

'I can do fancy laundry-work. I get up my own best things.'

George chuckled. Uncle Zed Byles must be told this. Uncle Zed would have to set up the drinks—*sure!* Uncle Zed would have to haul down his flag. Hazel asked demurely:

'Really and truly, do you value his opinion?'

'He could handle a six-horse team better'n any man on the road.'

'I see.'

But she didn't. Her vision of George had been blurred. Looking at him across a narrow table was like examining an Impressionist picture too close to the eyes. But this inability to see the man clearly merely whetted her interest and curiosity. And the purely physical attraction grew stronger. He seemed to be handsomer, bigger, more alert in his own setting. The uncomfortable thought



obtruded itself that inasmuch as he bulked so large in his own home, he would necessarily shrink into smaller proportions anywhere else.

All in all, the first evening was a success.

#### IV.

She slept soundly, tired after a long journey, but woke early, being disturbed by the others. She slipped out of bed, put on a dressing-gown, and sat down by the open window. Below, she could hear Mrs. Spragge moving about the kitchen, the pine boards creaked beneath her heavy weight; Samantha was milking; George had plenty to do in and about the barn. And it had been agreed that her breakfast would not be served till eight o'clock.

Hazel leaned her head upon her hand, and looked out of the window. She could see down the canyon, and follow the course of the creek till it reached the sand-dunes which fringed the ocean. It babbled joyously as it escaped from a small dam just above the berry-patch, becoming silent when it reached the tail of the rapid, where there was a large pool. Suddenly, George appeared in jumper and overalls, bare-headed, with sleeves rolled high above the elbow. Hazel was about to greet him, when she remarked something furtive about his movements. He went a tip-toe towards the creek, hiding himself behind the reeds and bushes. Then he dropped to the ground, and began to wriggle noiselessly through the grass. For a moment she lost sight of him. But, presently, his curly head appeared. He seemed to be staring into the creek, with his eyes close to the water. He lay motionless. Then there was a quick movement, a triumphant laugh, and George sprang to his feet. Something glittered in his hand.

'What is it?' cried Hazel.

He looked up to behold her charming face framed between two big plaits of hair.

'A nice fat trout for your breakfast.'

He held it up, still wriggling.

'However did you catch it?'

Before replying he killed the fish by knocking its head against the heel of his boot. Hazel winced, unaccustomed to seeing things killed. George approached. There were drops of water upon his massive forearm which sparkled in the sunlight.

'I tickled it. Sleep well?'

'Fine. How did you tickle it?'

He explained the procedure at some length. Hazel grasped the essential principle. The tickler must know the exact habitation of the trout who lies with nose and eyes upstream. The hand must glide into the water behind the fish without making a ripple. The tips of the fingers must slip along the belly of the trout. And *then* it must be grasped firmly behind the gills.

'Gracious! Could I do it?'

George looked doubtful, but he rose to the opportunity of paying a matutinal compliment.

'I believe you could do most anything, but ticklin' trout needs a lot o' practice. I've been at it since I was five years old. I'll take this in to mother. But I'll come back. I've got to pick some fresh berries for you.'

Hazel remained at the window, absorbing deliciously the odours of the garden, hearing the hens clucking and the sibilant hiss of milk streaming from full udders. The skies were cloudless, and the delicately poised leaves of the cotton-trees hung motionless, waiting for the land breeze, their constant lover. A cock quail began to call from the chaparral:

'Kah-kah-kah—a-o!'

There was an answering call from a gulch behind the house, and then another and another. And everywhere the bees seemed to be humming. Hazel saw a long row of hives at the end of the berry-patch. Presently her ear began to register other and less familiar sounds. A distant roaring, with odd intermittencies of silence, challenged her attention. She decided that this roaring was caused by the breaking of big combers upon rocks. The roaring died away more melodiously to the left. Again she leapt to the right conclusion. The combers lower down were breaking upon stretches of wet brown sand.

During the intermittencies of silence she could just hear the mournful mewing of the gulls; and her eyes could detect the flash of their white wings as they flew over the marsh.

She smiled happily.

The change enchanted her. This, so she told herself, was the real Arcadia, *le pays du tendre*, so different from the sham country about Oakland, a country divided by barb-wire fences, and defaced by jerry-built villas surrounded by smug gardens. It was quite delightful to reflect that she was twenty miles from a railroad.

George appeared with a basket, which he lined with leaves from the vine clambering over the porch. He began to pick

strawberries; selected the largest and ripest, a pleasant labour of love. His mistress looked on approvingly, sensible of an amazing exhilaration, a positive tingling of the pulses. From time to time George looked up at her to make some ingenuous remark.

'Gee! You have a pretty colour.'

Wilbur P. Stocker would have embarked upon a lengthy conversation, beginning and ending with an expression of his personal views. Had he stretched himself at full length upon the grass, a keen eye might have detected the thinning of his hair upon the back of his head. Wilbur was accounted 'brainy.' Twice, Hazel had visited Stocker's Landing upon the Sacramento. She knew what the wharf had cost, and the number of big warehouses belonging to Wilbur. The works of man, the pushing resourceful American *man*, interested him infinitely more than the works of God. Perhaps his God was Man. The thought had not occurred to Hazel before, and she dwelt upon it with derisive humour, trying to picture Wilbur at work in Spragge's Canyon, directing his men to cut down trees and clear the slopes of chaparral.

'Feel homesick?' shouted George.

'Not a bit.'

'Sure?'

'Quite.'

He filled his basket and disappeared, somewhat to Hazel's annoyance. His curt remarks punctuated agreeably her own thoughts. Also, she liked to look down upon him as he worked for her, gathering the fruit of his own soil for her, obviously possessed and obsessed by her.

'I am the very first,' she thought.

(To be continued.)

